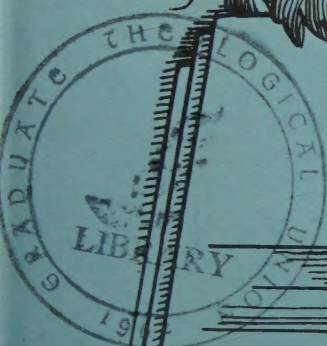


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Interpreting the New Testament and Interpreting Christ

Ernest Best

angle from which we approach any document and the pre-
 dictions with which we come clearly affect the way we
 interpret it. A historian of music comes to a Beethoven
 with different questions in mind from those of a con-
 cert pianist. I approach Scripture as an academic who is
 to interpret it and as a Christian who holds the NT in
 regard. I do not approach it as one who accepts its
 infallibility. Clearly this leaves open a considerable
 of options.

Let me begin with a simple question: From time to time
 drama groups present Biblical plays: should the
 characters be dressed in biblical or in modern costume? In
 each case a theological position is implied. If the char-
 acters are dressed as in the first century, the remoteness of
 the world said in the play becomes apparent; if the characters
 are dressed in the clothes we wear the historical nature of
 the situation is lost. The issues will become more clear as
 we continue. As a first step we need to realize that this is
 a modern problem. If you look at paintings of biblical scenes
 at any time prior to the nineteenth century you will see
 that the characters are dressed in the clothes of the artist's
 day and the scenery is that of the artist's own country,
 usually Italian or Dutch. However in some of the paintings
 of the pre-Raphaelites (as those by Hunt, Millais) the char-
 acters wear clothing drawn from the biblical period and depicted
 with great accuracy. Painters prior to the nineteenth cent-
 ury did not think about the matter; they saw no problem.
 The pre-Raphaelites saw a problem and solved it in one part-
 icular way. How and why did this change come about? This
 is a very simple statement of one of the underlying problems
 of biblical interpretation and before we are finished we shall
 see that we have to qualify it in many ways.

The Reformers by the very nature of the appeal to the
 authority of Scripture were forced to evolve a theory of the
 interpretation of Scripture. Previously it had been held
 that Scripture could be interpreted in more than one way,
 the authorization being particularly important, though as we

approach the time of the Reformation we find that the literal sense is gradually gaining the upper hand and interpretation is expected to accord with that sense. Both Luther and Calvin strongly affirm that the only valid sense of Scripture was the literal. In practice Luther did not always adhere as closely to this sense as Calvin. Not only was the Gospel clear in its essential sense to any one who read Scripture, but most of the Scripture itself in its literal sense would be clear to any one. Those parts which were not at once clear could be clarified in respect of their meaning from other passages that were clear. Scripture being clear in this way could be applied directly to the lives of men or, if some adjustments had to be made these were perfectly obvious. Thus Luther, while applying the arguments of Paul in Galatians to personal salvation and the lives of believers, also adapted much of what Paul said against the Judaizers into attacks on the Pope and his followers. To Luther this seemed to be a simple and clear updating of the literal sense of Scripture for his own situation.

By and large the Reformers and their successors found it easy to apply most of Scripture directly to their own situations. The world of the sixteenth century was very like that of the first century: people thought and behaved in the same way; personal salvation could be conceived in the same way; ethical problems had hardly changed. If we go back to our original question, the answer of the Reformers would have been: put Jesus in dress contemporary with yourself; it makes no difference.

The search for the literal sense of Scripture once begun led finally to the historical-critical movement, the modern way of interpreting Scripture. The process was long and devious and many outside influences played a part in it. We cannot examine these in detail. There was the discovery of the New World and the realisation that the world's centre did not lie in Jerusalem or Judaea; this was symbolized by the selection of Greenwich as zero longitude. A civilisation as old as that of Israel, but with a chronology different from Israel's, was discovered in Egypt. Descartes sent modern philosophy on its way by taking as his starting point not God but himself. The scientific movement asserted that proof lay in examination and observation rather than in the acceptance of authority. Within the church the

eral sense came to be understood as closely associated with the intention of the writer. Despite the assertion that Scripture was its own interpreter and ought to be interpreted from within itself it was soon realised that there were passages which could not be understood without passing beyond the bounds of Scripture. The Greek and Latin classics were searched for parallels to words and thoughts; Jewish writings were re-read for the light they could throw upon the Jewish authors of the NT and the life and time of Jesus. Thus the minds of the original writers were illuminated with material drawn from outside Scripture and so illuminated were better understood.

Though historians existed in the Greek and Roman world and though chroniclers and historians continued to be found from time to time in the Middle Ages and afterwards there was no serious study of history as such. Whenever it was studied or written about this was done in order either to glorify the past of a particular dynasty or to give guidance to the present; it was never studied purely as an interest in itself. History was not included in the curriculum of the ancient world from which those of the Middle Ages and the post-Reformation period were derived; only in the nineteenth century for the first time were history and archaeology studied seriously; in 1893 before a Chair of History was founded in the University of Glasgow, and Glasgow was not particularly late on this. The discoveries archaeologists brought back from Egypt and the Middle East to European centres of culture showed quickly and clearly that people had dressed very differently in the ancient world both from what the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries believed and from what was worn in the nineteenth century. This combined with the emphasis of the historians on the correct reporting of historical facts quickly led in the visual arts to the presentation of first century characters in first century dress. Hence the stress on the artists began to lay on depicting characters drawn from the NT in first century garb.

Before we go on we should note one important feature of the historical method, a feature which would have been rejected by the successors to the Reformers. When we attempt to discover what was in the mind of its original writers, the general sense of Scripture, we have to treat Scripture as we would treat any other writing. Scripture cannot be given a special status, nor can any section of it be exempt from the

same examination as the same event or narrative would receive if the account of it was found in another book. The literal sense must be the sense detected by the ordinary methods of historical analysis. In the nineteenth century it was assumed that the application of these methods to historical material would result in highly probable, if not certain, results in respect of events in the past. Historians expected that just as physical scientists could produce conclusions which would be accepted by anyone who examined their experiments, so they, the historians, could produce equally sure conclusions about the past, which anyone who examined the evidence would accept. Returning to our initial question about the presentation of Jesus in biblical play that would mean that if we were to present a biblical play showing Jesus in first century guise, then we could do this without any dispute as to the way in which he was portrayed. Unfortunately for such a view historians today are much less confident of our ability to create a picture of the past which would be generally accepted. They realize that when they examine the evidence from the past, estimate its reliability and the relationship of one piece of evidence to another, they allow their modern presuppositions to govern the way in which they view the evidence. Thus the hoped for neutral picture of Jesus in first century guise will be in part shaped in terms of today. We have certain views about the development and understanding of personality; these views may have a Freudian or Jungian slant and the slant will force us to look at Jesus from that particular angle and may lead us to explain him in terms drawn from a modern psychological theory. The modern view of an incident in the life of Jesus or of the development of his character would then be incomprehensible to a person from the first century, even if we could be assured that it would accurately represent what happened then.

This means that one side of the original two alternatives must be qualified. We are unable to present Jesus or any figure from the biblical period in a natural and unambiguous way so that he fits into that period and is at the same time able to be understood by us. If we are to understand we need to be able to present the ancient world in terms that belong to our world. We shall later go on to examine the other alternative and find that it also needs to be qualified, however we can see now how our initial question arose.

nt, Interpreting NT, IBS 3, 1981
rest in history together with a rapidly changing modern
ld made men realize the great difference between the
ld of the first century and our world. It was no longer
ssible to evade the problem simply by dressing Jesus in
ntemporary clothing knowing that no one would perceive
difference. Today with the spread of education every-
ny sees the difference.

As we have looked at the problem we shall have begun to
lize that it is not simply the question of the dress
at Jesus or any first century figure wore that makes the
fference between the first century and this century, nor
it such a simple thing as the change in transport from
rior to car. The problem facing the artist who
tempts to represent a biblical scene is comparatively
ple. The problem facing the man or woman who wishes to
erpret the Bible for today is much more profound and
plex. One aspect of this can be illustrated by a re-
lling of the story of the Samaritan. "A man was going
n from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers,
o stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him
lf-dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that
nd; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.
likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw
p, passed by on the other side. A Samaritan came along
l saw the man lying at the side of the road. He went
ross and realized that he was a Jew. At that moment the
opened his eyes, looked up and whispered "Help me". The
amaritan kicked him in the teeth. Then when he saw that,
though he was almost naked, he had on a decent pair of
users, he undid the zip, pulled them off, rolled that
to the edge of the road and pushed him over the cliff.
ting the trousers he went on to the next village. In
e inn there he sold them for two pence." That is how
ery Jew expected the story to end when Jesus began it.
us' conclusion was as sharp a kick in the teeth to his
ish hearers as the Samaritan had given the injured man.
e of us can today experience the gut reaction that
us' hearers had when they heard the story as Jesus told
We miss that gut reaction because the story is so
hiliar, but even more so because in most parts of the
stern world there is no radical division within society
which one portion of it hates the other with the venom
th which Jew and Samaritan hated each other. Making

the priest into a bishop, the Levite into an elder and the Samaritan into a commercial traveller, as I have heard done will not bring the story alive in the way it was alive in Palestine in the first century. The difference between our society and that of the first century Palestine is not one of dress alone, but the absence of a deep cleft which ran through Jewish society. Undoubtedly there are many little clefts in Western society but that is not the same. Northern Ireland is the only country in western society in which there is such a deep division as existed in Palestine in the first century. There, at least, the story ought to be understood.

A word needs to be said about the familiarity of biblical stories and therefore the difficulty of understanding them. During the centuries as music has developed it has experienced many innovations. At the time they were recognized as new, and those who heard them objected strongly. Today we hear the same music but any idea of its "newness" has gone. Our ears are attuned to accept what seemed strange to the music's first hearers. Our ears equally miss the newness in stories from the NT. Like the music the stories have become part of our culture.

We need then to look at the differences between our society and that of the Bible. Of course man is basically the same kind of being now as he was then, a mixture of goodness and selfishness. Many individual problems within the field of the family and personal relationships still exist in the same intensity as they possessed in the first century; on the other hand, as we shall see, new problems have appeared and some old ones have disappeared or no longer worry us. Man is still called on to deny himself, to take up his cross and to lose his life for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, though the way in which he does these may be different today from the time of the Bible.

It is undoubtedly true that on the one hand life seems have shrunk, the borders of the world are so much closer; on the other hand life has become very much more complex. Until a few generations ago most people lived their entire lives within the village or small town in which they had been born; they rarely moved out of its area. Occasional a war might recruit them, but even then they did not go far afield often; they remained to fight for their own area.

wealthy may have made the "grand tour" but they were only a few. Contrast that with the way in which people move around today; almost any one can, in fact many do, go overseas for their holidays. The world has shrunk, and shrinking it has become more complex. Fifty years ago it did not matter what would then have been thought of as minor arab rulers did; today we take an avid interest in what they do. The industrialisation of Japan closes motor factories in Britain. Cheap labour in Hong-Kong brings unemployment to the mills of Lancashire.

Not merely has life shrunk and become more complex but attitudes have vastly changed. If I go out and find my car will not start I look for a mechanic; in the ancient world I could have looked for a magician. If a cow goes dry, the farmer calls in the vet and not the witch doctor. If we want to know what the future holds, we do not kill a bird to examine its entrails or have an astrologer read the stars for us; we send for a statistician to tell us about general trends and we base our decisions upon his conclusions. The supernatural has disappeared out of daily life. We no longer attribute what happens to us to the gods or to evil powers. When we want to find out if a fact or a theory is true we do not sit down and argue about it but we observe, experiment and draw conclusions.

If you then want to present Jesus or some other NT character in a play for today how do you go about it? Let us set up a few unfinished scenarios of the way in which this might be attempted.

Jesus was flying back from Dublin to Manchester. In the airport lounge he noticed this woman who was very agitated. By chance he found himself sitting beside her on the plane. She began to talk to him. She told him that she was flying back to Manchester to her sister who had made all the arrangements. "You see it's my sixth", she said. "The first isn't a year old yet and the oldest is only seven. I am just worn down with looking after them and I can't have another." Finish the story by telling how Jesus advised the woman, and realise that different people will finish it in completely different ways.

Paul was travelling up from Sheffield to London by train. He begins to talk to the man in the seat next to him and learns that he is a trade union official going up to a union

conference to decide whether to have a strike or not. They are not a large or powerful union and have few resources to fall back on; they had lost out badly in the last round of wage increases; if they had a rise, others would demand the differentials be maintained; there would be inflation all round; because of their weakness they might in any case have to settle for something less than their fair increase. What does Paul say?

It would be quite easy to go on multiplying instances like this. You can see that once you put Jesus or Paul into modern clothing you release a whole set of problems for which there are no easy answers. Yet it is these problems which we often try to solve using the NT. How then are we to interpret the NT?

The problem is intensified because a great deal of what we find in the NT is tied down to its own particular situation. The story of the good Samaritan was a good illustration of this. There are many more. Jesus said that new wine put into old bottles would split them. The obvious reference is to the new faith which Jesus brought, as destructive of the old Jewish faith. For the first Christians the relationship of Christianity to Judaism was a live issue; it is not for the vast majority of congregations in almost every part of the world today. We can understand intellectually the change from Judaism to Christianity, but we cannot experience it as an existential problem. A great part of the NT is couched just in terms of this change. Paul's teaching on justification by faith relates to the Jewish law. The teaching of the Hebrews on the sacrifice of Jesus is based on the Jewish sacrificial cultus. It is not easy to transfer such passages and remember they are very large sections of the NT, to our situation and find easy parallels. Do we then just set them entirely aside and pay no heed to them because today it is impossible to apply them directly?

Let me pick up a point which ought perhaps to have been introduced earlier but comes in more easily now. Do we interpret the NT or do we interpret Christ? Without a doubt in the church we are sent to interpret Christ. We do not set out to see which parts of the NT speak with power to our situation, but to see how Christ himself speaks to us within our situation. Once we say this we see new aspects of our problem. So far we have talked mainly about ethical problems.

moral situations. The question of Christology ought to have been raised before this. Now it becomes acute.

Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked his disciples what they thought they were saying about him. The disciples reported that the people were saying that he was John the baptizer or Elijah or one of the prophets. These are all Jewish terms and are hardly the kind of estimates that any one would make of Jesus today. The disciples for their part confess Jesus to be the Christ; this is also a Jewish term. We have become used to it, though we rarely appreciate its meaning. It would have meant nothing to a Jew or a Greek in the ancient world other than after a bath they had rubbed oil on their skin to soften it; it had no religious value for them as it had for the Jew. The Christians quickly had to find a way to express their faith in Jesus, using terms which could be understood both in the Jewish and the Greco-Roman worlds, so they used terms like Son of God or Lord. We know how the discussion went on for centuries and how orthodox christology was forged on the basis of current philosophical concepts and psychological ideas of personality. If we wished to update Caesarea Philippi we would not wish to express the alternatives to "Christ" in Jewish terms, for they would need to be explained to people if they are to understand their significance and thus his. With whom then should we contrast Christ and what terms should we use to describe him? There is no christology in fixed terms which can be brought into every situation. The very expression of christology is itself subject to the culture and situation in which it is verbalized.

If we distinguish between interpreting Christ and interpreting the NT we need to say something about the relation of the NT to Christ. The books of the NT might be looked on as a number of windows through which we can look at Christ. A preacher does not preach a particular book of the NT, but he does not preach Mark, but he preaches or interprets Christ as seen through the window of Mark. Another analogy would be to describe Christ as a theme-tune and the NT as variations on it. We have no access to the original tune except through the variations. To interpret Christ for ourselves is to produce the variation in our situation which is appropriate to that situation and culture. The books of the NT might yet again be regarded as similar to photographs of a great building. No one photograph can include more

than one aspect of the building; we must photograph from south or east or north or west; each picture only gives a limited view. It takes all the photographs to begin to build up the total picture. The building is more than each individual picture, even more than all the pictures taken together. And the stance from which we need a photograph today may not be any of the positions from which the original photographs were taken.

None of these metaphors is perfect, and none of the books of the NT gives a perfect representation of Christ. They are tied to their own situation and limited by the peculiarities of that situation and the failings of their writers. It might seem that we could extrapolate from their situation to ours, but any statistician will tell you that to extrapolate from a given set of figures to produce a prediction of what may happen is a very dangerous process. Yet this is what we have to do, given the NT. From it and the personalities, incidents, events, teaching, etc. it provides we have to bring Christ into our situation and our culture. To interpret the NT we have to interpret that which the NT itself interprets the act of God in Christ.

I do not intend to provide examples of how this may be done. Needless to say when I preach or teach I am concerned with this process of interpretation but here I am concerned only with the theory which underlies the process and I only need to indicate some of the guidelines along which interpretation must always take place.

(1) We need to know as much as we can about what the author meant when he wrote some particular bit of the NT, about the situation of his readers and how they would understand what he wrote, about the ancient world in general and how people thought and acted then. That means that we use the historical-critical method with all the exactitude and rigour that is possible. This knowledge alone does not as we have seen provide an interpretation valid for today of either the NT or Christ, but it is an essential preliminary.

There is a subsidiary point to be made. Within the Christian church subsequent to the writing of Scripture there has been a continual process of re-understanding what God has done in Christ in relation to the changing situation of the church; examining that process we can see how the church's understanding of Christ has changed with changing context.

Knowledge of church history is therefore of assistance helping us to see how we may understand. And it will be of assistance since we stand in the direct continuous chain of Christian witness which goes back to first apostles. It is this chain which we wish to add into our period.

There is however one error that needs to be avoided the error of stopping in some period of church history. When sixteenth century painters depicted biblical characters in sixteenth century dress that was perhaps excusable; what was not excusable was eighteenth century painters depicting biblical characters in sixteenth century dress. Too often we are satisfied to depict Christ in the light of the Reformation or the counter-Reformation and to think that the world has moved on since then.

2) Whoever would interpret for Christians the cultural report of God's work in Christ in its relation to today must participate in the Christian experience; he is at the end of that chain of witness that goes back to the beginning and is a part of it. The agnostic scholar can argue cogently about the meaning of Scripture as it was intended by its authors, and many agnostics and secular scholars have contributed greatly in the search for the meaning of the NT within the first century and have brought genuine insights into its meaning. The interpretation for the church today must however come from those who stand within the Christian experience. This experience is never individual but always corporate. The Christian who attempts to interpret draws from an existing experience, that of the whole church, and in turn contributes to it. He depends not only on his contemporaries but also on all the past life of the church. He expresses the individual aspect of this experience by saying that he interprets as one who has the mind of Christ (1 Cor.2.16), who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy (1 Cor.7.35), who has the charisma of the utterance of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor.12.8), or who knows the living and exalted Christ.

3) All interpretation takes place on the basis of a theological and philosophical position. The culture in which we have been brought up, the church tradition in which we have been nurtured and the thought we have given

to working out our own theological position determine the way in which we interpret every part of Scripture and in the end interpret Christ. If we go back to the example of the woman flying to Manchester for an abortion the way in which we would finish the scenario will depend to a very high degree on the philosophical and theological presuppositions we bring to it. If we believe that life begins at conception we shall certainly decide in one way; if we do not hold this belief we may have others which affect us in determining what advice we would give the woman. What we have also to observe is that our cultural, theological and philosophical viewpoints are in part determined by the existing way in which we interpret Christ. As we interpret him in relation to an existing situation so he should in fact be readjusting the philosophical, theological and cultural views with which we started. We must always be ready to allow this to happen, otherwise, in real sense, the solutions we reach are already dictated for us before we approach Scripture and Christ. And since we cannot interpret in any other way than through theological, philosophical and cultural presuppositions it must be our duty always to re-examine these so that we never make absolute claims for our own interpretations.

(4) It is all very well knowing everything about the original meaning of a passage in Scripture and possessing a true and valuable experience of Christ and of the church and an awareness of the theology and philosophy which determined many of our decisions but all this is useless unless there is added to it a sensitivity to the world in which we live. The context in which we interpret is both universal, we belong to a common culture, and particular, we are dealing with particular situations. Christological re-interpretation belongs to the former; it cannot be over-particularized. Most personal ethical problems belong to a particular situation and a solution to them must be found in relation to that situation. Work at the original meaning of Scripture will show us the difference between the culture of our world and the world as it was two thousand years ago, but there is more to this than just knowing the difference. It is necessary to be aware of the real problems that affect people today; but to approach the matter through "problems" is, perhaps, to take the wrong approach; we can learn about the intricacies of making a decision in respect of abortion, unemployment and war but these are not the only issues which affect people. Whoever wishes to interpret must be sensitive to the loneliness and

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eties of one kind or another which affect individuals,
itive also to the moods of an age, its despair or
mism.

15) The ultimate interpretation of the NT is not into a
asset of words, but into a life lived amongst people.
ologians look for a new formula in words that will
ress the christology relevant to our culture; moralists
for solutions to the problems with which we are faced
our varying situations; preachers attempt to apply texts
their congregations. All end by using a set of words.
translation that really counts is not that into words
that into lives. The NT is a set of words but as such
as a set of words which leads us back to the activity of
in Christ. The theme tune to which it provides
ations is not a verbalized "idea" but an actual life
ed by a real person. The only ultimate translation of
is into another life. Words are one stage on the
from the actual loving existence of Jesus to the re-
ression of his love in the lives of man today. The
e which is to appear must be a life based on his life
be a true exegesis of it. It must also be part of a
community of lives, a part of the body of Christ which
elf is an actual re-presentation of the life of Christ.
must be so lived amongst other lives that it is
sitive to their needs and attempts to meet those needs.

Demythologizing the Ascension -

A Reply to Professor Gooding

J.D.G. Dunn

The editor has kindly given me the opportunity of replying to Professor David Gooding's article on "Demythologizing Old and New, and Luke's Description of the Ascension: A Layman's Appraisal" (Irish Biblical Studies, Issue 2, April 1980, pp. 95-119). I do so with some hesitation, principally because the style chosen by Dr. Gooding is not very conducive to a fruitful discussion. He evidently sees himself in the role of Counsel for the Defence, called to defend Luke put in the dock by those he calls "the demythologizers". Apparently a charge has been brought against Luke (p112). Luke has been "caught out like a criminal" (p114) ! Such a style makes for easy reading but the cost is high. For it tends to sacrifice a painstaking accuracy in favour of a rhetoric which at times cannot refrain from playing to the gallery and indulging in a kind of "reductio per sarcasm". It tends to work with selective quotations, selected to provide material for polemic rather than to provide as dispassionate as possible a review of the evidence. And my clear impression on reading and re-reading Dr Gooding's article is that he has not managed to avoid such pitfalls.

May I therefore suggest a different style from that of the court room drama? If our endeavour is to understand the NT in its own terms, and Luke in particular, a closer analogy than that of the criminal in the dock is that of the person from another country whose language and culture and way of thinking are different from ours. He is trying to communicate with us (Professor Gooding and myself included) but because words in one language usually do not have the same range of meaning as their nearest translation equivalents, we the hearers have to question the speaker to try and ascertain what he means in our language. The procedure is not always easy since concepts in his language may have a whole background of culture and thought-world which is different from ours. So to understand his more profound statements we will have to become acquainted in some degree with that background. Dr. Gooding, Professor of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, as much a professional as any

biblical scholars he attacks (despite his modest disclaimer in the title to his article), will fully appreciate the problems of translation from one language to another. I hope the analogy will be more acceptable all round.

My unhappiness with Dr. Gooding's procedure in his article centres on two major issues. First, he has made no real attempt to expound or explain my position. His quotations are almost exclusively drawn from the last page and a bit of the fifteen-page article (excluding notes). And he proceeds by appending his reflections to often brief quotations - sections which are his, and not exposition of what I said; on the contrary, they are often tangential and tendentious, at the point, and give a misleading impression of what I was trying to say. This is precisely the fault that the English style for the Defence can quickly slide into, so that the style is better avoided altogether.

Secondly, there is the much more serious failing, that Dr. Gooding makes little attempt to expound and explain the key passage (Acts 1. 9-11) within its historical context, but rather contents himself initially with an assumption as to its meaning and latterly tries to press an interpretation of the passage which can hardly escape the charge of forcing a meaning that was never intended by the writer. Permit me to do my own expounding and explaining on these points, I hope thereby that I can clarify the discussion and the issue, and at the same time both answer Professor Gooding's charges and calm his fears.

I

First, has Dr. Gooding appreciated what I was trying to say? The simplest way to proceed here is to restate my position and then to itemize some of the more serious misunderstandings or misrepresentations in Dr. Gooding's article. I trust that the spirit of Bultmann will not be offended if I do not attempt to speak on his behalf too. For my views on Bultmann at this point I may simply refer to the original article which Dr. Gooding criticizes - "Demythologizing - the Problem of Myth in the NT, NT Interpretation, I.H. Marshall, Paternoster Press 1977, pp285-307, particularly pp294-300. For the record I need simply say that I do not share Bultmann's concept of this world.

as a completely closed continuum of cause and affect, and I do affirm as a fundamental belief God's involvement in this world and particularly the incarnation of his word in Christ.

My basic complaint can be put this way: Dr. Gooding has pulled apart the two sides of what I see as a single process the process of hermeneutics - the process whereby I in the twentieth century come to an understanding which is not merely an antiquarian's interest in long dead sentiments of a past civilization, but an understanding which is open to God speaking his word afresh to me in the twentieth century through these same words of the first century.

How am I to do this? By recognizing that there are two poles to the hermeneutical process, two foci round which the hermeneutical ellipse swings (it is more complicated than the analogy suggests, but I am not writing a book about it at the point). What do I mean? The two poles, the two foci are the NT itself and myself. Let me comment on them separately and briefly.

(a) The NT itself. The NT is a given. Its text is as near an original as we need. That is to say, we actually have the words that were written by the first evangelists and apostles. These are our only first hand witness to the revelation of God in Christ in the first century - in the Christ-event, that is, in Jesus' life, death and resurrection. For me therefore they constitute the only real source material for our reconstruction and understanding of the Christ-event. They define for me (I speak only for myself for the time being) what the Christ-event was and what Christianity was the beginning. They therefore serve as an indispensable norm, an authoritative canon if you like, by which I must evaluate all other characterizations of Christianity, all other interpretations of the Christ-event (such as we find, for example, in the numerous biographies of Jesus which litter the history of the past two centuries). These inspired writings provide a yardstick by which I can test all subsequent definitions of Christianity. Whatever further conclusions I come to when I investigate the NT more closely this definitive, authoritative, normative character of the NT remains constant.

(b) Me myself. No man comes to the NT with precisely the same background, with precisely the same intellectual make-up with precisely the same questions. Of course there will be

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large measure of overlap between different people's quest-

. But when I bring my question to the NT I hope to hear answer for my question, not for the other man's. This is true whatever the question - whether it is, "What I do to be saved?", or "What should I believe about God?" "What relevance has Jesus' word about turning the other cheek to me now?", or "What should I do, what is right for me in this situation?", or whatever. Subjective? Yes, but in the sense that I believe God still deals directly with individual and has regard to the uniqueness of that individual's personality and gifts and circumstances.

The hermeneutical process then is the bringing of these two foci into interaction. The first thing to do at any point of inquiry into the NT is to find out what it means, the original author intended his original readers to hear. This is a matter of exegesis, of explorations into the grammatical and historical context. The meaning will by no means be always self-evident. Indeed it will often be open to diverse interpretations. But always we have the givenness of the text itself to direct us, to serve as a check and norm for our interpretation. At the same time we should be aware of the fact that the texts which we hear most clearly, the interpretations which speak to us most directly, will be in part determined by the second focus (me myself) - by the stage we have reached in my pilgrimage of life, by my particular circumstances at that stage, and so on. And at once we realize that even in trying to inquire into the focus of the text itself, the hermeneutical ellipse has begun already to swing round both foci. In other words, this hermeneutical ellipse is another way of describing the conversation with the Signer who tries to speak to us across the barrier of diverse language and culture (the analogy suggested above on p. 10). Or alternatively, this hermeneutical ellipse is what we mean by demythologizing - the translation of the language of the NT into the language of today while remaining as faithful as possible to the original meaning of the NT writers.

I would have hoped that all this was sufficiently clear in what I said on p300f of the original article. Unfortunately Dr Gooding has missed the balance and thrust of my words on more than one occasion, and to set the record straight I may be permitted to demonstrate this.

(1) On p301 I wrote

"The point is that each must tackle the problem for himself and no one else can tackle it for him; for in the end of the day it is the problem of how I express my faith as a Christian. The more one regards the Christ-event and the faith of the first Christians as normative, the more tightly one is bound to the expressions of the faith and hope of these first Christians as the starting-point for the elucidation and interpretation of one's own self-understanding and experience of grace."

Here I was drawing attention in the two sentences to the two poles of the hermeneutical process. First the second pole, me myself. Second, the first pole, the NT itself. Dr Gooding pulls the two sentences apart (on the principle presumably of "divide and destroy"). The first he evidently takes as inviting what he later calls the "chaos of subjective relativism" (p103), where everyone can believe what he likes, so long as he believes it (p100). That, I have to stress, is entirely Dr Gooding's interpretation of what I said - it is certainly not what I meant. I was simply saying that Christian faith must be my faith as a Christian and not merely something I believe Paul or John believed nineteen centuries ago. This I think is sufficiently evident when the sentence is read as following on from its preceding context.

The second sentence Dr Gooding takes in an even more extraordinary way. Having quoted it in isolation from its preceding sentence, he comments, "So then, not the NT (which may or may not be normative), but one's own self-understanding and experience of grace are the chief things to be interpreted" (p101). Notice the posing as an antithesis what was never intended as such - "not the NT....but one's own self-understanding" - the voice of the Counsel for the Defence, but hardly of the exegete. My purpose in the second sentence was to rule out precisely the interpretation which Dr Gooding was pleased to draw from the first! My point is to stress the role of the NT as norm in this hermeneutical process, that I must judge whether and how I have heard God speak to me by the norm of the Christ-event. By breaking up my line of argument he has missed my point and made me argue against myself! - clever advocacy, perhaps, but hardly advancing the cause of truth.

(2) On p102 Dr Gooding gives an extended quotation of

al half paragraph of my essay - too long to repeat here. It I stressed the dialectic or dialogic nature of the hermeneutical process and emphasized (a) that it was not a two-way process - other Christians, other ecclesiastical traditions are engaged in the same hermeneutical process, and they must be listened to as well, otherwise my appreciation of the body of Christ is defective; and (b) that the hermeneutical process never finishes - the faith never reaches a final form that can remain fixed and unalterable from one generation, one century to the next. It does not have a fixed definition and norm in the NT, but all subsequent formulations must remain tentative and provisional - here we have no permanent city. To be a living faith can not simply be a repetition of John's words or Augustin's words or Luther's words in unaltered form; it must be an expression of faith now, a faith that is faithful to the first faith but a re-expression of it, reminted in the light of the ever new experience of God's grace now.

Such was my concern, which unfortunately Professor Gooding can only parody by likening it to the "myths and endless genealogies" which simply "minister questionings" (Tim 1.4 AV; "promote speculations" RSV). When I speak of repeated questions I think of my being put in question by the NT, so that I must respond to this word from God if I am to maintain any integrity and peace of mind. I think of questions which seek to clarify the NT's answer to the earliest question, which seek an ever-deeper insight into the reality of faith then, the meaning of the original revelation. I think of questions that follow from answers, further questions, questions of the form, "Well, then, if that is the case, what about....? If that is the case how would I.....?" Such questioning can be interpreted unkindly) as the endless round of speculation. That was not at all how I intended it. Such a dialogue is for me simply the character of the faith which is growing and maturing as it responds ever anew to the word of God.

(3) On pages 103f. the misrepresentation becomes more serious. Professor Gooding states as a matter of fact that "Dr Dunn does not believe that in the NT we have God's word. He believes that what we have here is simply 'the faith of the first Christians' (p301)...The Christ-event is more than the expression of the faith of the first Christians." Here I am afraid I became rather angry - there is

more than a hint of character assassination in this accusation. Please notice how the phrase "the faith of the first Christians" is introduced. The word "simply" has been conjured out of thin air. My assertion of the normativeness of the Christ-event and of the faith of the first Christian (quoted above pxx) has become for Dr Gooding an assertion that I believe the NT to be simply the faith of the first Christians, that I believe the Christ-event to be no more than the expression of the faith of the first Christians. Where does Dr Gooding derive such information from? He does not tell us. And it certainly did not come from the original "Demythologizing" article. In a court room I fear the judge would have to rebuke Counsel for the Defence for such a breach in courtesy, to put it no more highly. Let me assure Dr Gooding that despite his confident and unfounded opinion I do believe "that in the NT we have God's Word", that in the NT we have the words (though not all the words) through which God spoke to the first Christians, and that in the article he finds so distasteful my concern was that the Christians today might still hear God's voice speaking through these same words, not just the words of Paul to the Romans, but the word of God still speaking through Paul.

(4) I suppose I should not be surprised when Dr Gooding goes on to caricature my thesis in Unity and Diversity in the New Testament (SCM Press, 1977): "Dr Dunn tells us that the faith of the first Christians, while possessing a common core, is for the rest a mass of mutually incompatible ideas..." (p104, my underlining). Please note that this time there are no quotation marks round the key phrase. Once again Dr Gooding has exaggerated something I said (a whole book this time) into something I cannot recognize as an opinion of mine. Again for the record let me simply stress that the main emphasis of that book is given in the title - unity and diversity - both words to be given emphasis. The diversity of faith includes disagreements on detail and on points of emphasis, and even some incompatibility when the two statements in question are abstracted from their historical situations. But to characterize the diversity side of my thesis as postulating "a mass of mutually incompatible ideas" is to resort to a level of misrepresentation which I would not have been surprised to find in the propaganda of National Socialism or Soviet Communism but hardly expected find in the writing of a fellow-Christian.

I could take up several other points, but I weary of discussion at this level, and hopefully I have said enough to indicate that Dr Gooding has indeed misread me, that his criticism of my earlier "Demythologizing" article is largely misdirected, and that the logic of his "exposition" is the logic of his own polemic and not of anything I wrote. So I shall turn at once to my second complaint.

II

Secondly, for the bulk of the article Dr Gooding simply ignores the fact that Luke's account of the ascension needs to be interpreted. It is not entirely self-evident what he means. Dr Gooding in fact acknowledges this when at last he turns to the question of how we are to understand Luke's account - on pp114f. (the article's twentieth page!). Yet much of his rebuke of "the demythologizers" prior to that has simply assumed that Luke's meaning is clear and that "the demythologizers" are being somewhat perverse in their response to it:

"Well, if people do not believe that there exists a heaven in the sense in which John, Luke, Paul and the rest of the NT speak of it, and in which according to them all Christ spoke of it, then we must accept their statement: they do not believe. Let the matter rest there" (p108).

But in what sense did they speak of heaven? That is the question which must first be asked before the serious accusations of unfaith are brought forth. In particular, what was Luke's view of heaven and of the ascension?

The only way to go about answering this question is to let Luke speak for himself - the device of quoting phrases or clauses within an explanatory elaboration superimposes an interpretation on the text and confuses the original text with the interpretation in the eye of the reader - good counsel for the Defence tactics but not good exegesis.

The whole uninterrupted passage in Acts is as follows (Acts 1.9-11 RSV):

9. As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come again in the same way as you saw him go into heaven".

How does Luke think of heaven and of the final parting of Jesus from his disciples? The most obvious understanding, I submit, is that he thought of Jesus going up into heaven. Professor Gooding interprets v9 as embracing a two stage journey to heaven (p114) - first, the "literal, physical ascent into the air; and that part of the journey they saw" second, a stage which Luke himself tells us they did not see "a cloud received him out of their sight." "What happened then", he continues, "and how the passage from our world to the other world was effected, Luke does not attempt to describe, or even claim to know" (p114). Unfortunately he ignores v11, where the angels describe what has happened as Jesus "being taken up from you into heaven". The idea of a two stage journey, only the second stage of which involved the entry into heaven, is hardly Luke's. It is Dr Gooding's own - his interpretation superimposed upon the text. Whereas the most obvious reading of Acts is that Luke thought in terms of an ascension, a going up into heaven.

Why has Dr Gooding pressed this interpretation upon Acts? The answer again is clear. For the simple reason that Luke seems to think of heaven as up there and of the ascension of Jesus as a literal going up to a place literally above them, from which he will subsequently appear - on clouds. The same sort of portrayal, in fact, as we find in I Thess.4. 16-17:

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord."

What Dr Gooding does not like to accept is that Luke thought of heaven as a place beyond man's sight high in the

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- as we today would say, a three-dimensional entity
in the time-space complex. Hence the learned but brief
reference on p113 to the "several cosmologies current in the
first century AD" ("as we all know" - hear again the wooing
words of the Counsel for the Defence). But that is nothing
more than a carefully selected handful of dust to throw in
the jury's eyes. The true exegete will want to see a much
clearer picture of the ancient cosmologies - particularly
the cosmologies of the Judeo-Christian tradition. A brief
response to Dr Gooding is not the place for such an extensive
survey. But fortunately there are various dictionary and
encyclopedia articles which have done it for us. So let me
only refer for example to the article on "Heaven" by H.
Bietenhard in The New International Dictionary of New Testa-
ment Theology, ed. C. Brown, Paternoster Press, Vol.2, 1976,
1938-196, also pp205-210.

Bietenhard shows that the Judeo-Christian cosmology re-
flected in the Bible seems to consist of variations of the
basic idea of what can be called "the cosmic building" -
underworld below, the earth in the middle, the heaven
above (cf. Ex.20.4; Ps.115.15-17). God has made the "upper
realm" his dwelling place (Deut.26.15; Ps.104.3; Amos 9.6);
he sits enthroned in heaven (e.g. 1 Kings 22.19; Ps.82.1;
Isa.7.9-14), and rides on clouds through his domain (Deut.
32.26; Isa 19.1). Particularly interesting are the passages
which seem to envisage a plurality of heavens (Deut.10.14;
Isa.63.8; Ps.148.4). This way of visualizing the larger
wholeness of the cosmos seems to have become increasingly
popular as we enter the NT era, and there were various
speculations as to how many heavens there actually were.
Some thought in terms of only one (1 Enoch, IV Ezra). Others
of three or five heavens (Testament of Levi). Others of
seven heavens (Testament of Abraham, Ascension of Isaiah,
Apocryphic tradition). The NT writings belong in this context
and make most sense when read against this background. So
we are not surprised at the frequency with which the NT
writers speak of the "heavens" (plural), including several
passages which speak of Christ's ascension as an ascending
"into", "above" or "through" the heavens (Acts 2.34; Eph.4.
8; Heb.4.14; 7.26). Nor are we surprised that Paul thinks
in terms of at least three heavens, with paradise identified
with the third heaven (II Cor. 12.2-3)

Within this context, I submit, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Luke, in describing Christ's final departure from his disciples after his resurrection, thought of it as an ascension (in the straightforward meaning of the word), a rising up into the heaven or heavens to sit at God's right hand (cf. Acts 2.33-4; 7.55-6). This is not accusation against Luke, as though he had knowingly and criminally distorted the true picture of reality. It is simply a matter of recognizing that such a way of understanding reality was typical of the ancient world. We today have a fuller picture of the universe. We know that beyond what is visible to the naked eye there are galaxies and the vastness of space. We cannot think of a series of heavens suspended above the earth and of God enthroned in the highest heaven. But ancient man could, and evidently did. Not unnaturally - how better to depict the majesty of God as high and lifted up far beyond the range of puny man's eyesight and strength? That was their way, we may say, of affirming that God is beyond the limits of man's perception and power. The only difference between them and us is that we recognize that such an affirmation can no longer be described in three-dimensional terms of the time-space complex. So that when we use such language, not least the talk of ascension, we do so in a consciously metaphorical way - whereas they could use it literally. But that is simply to say we "demythologize".

In point of fact Dr Gooding does precisely the same thing when earlier in the article he claims that "millions of Christians all down the centuries" have understood "that besides our visible universe there is another world, normally invisible to us, in which the presence of God is experienced immediately" and have taken that to be the NT's understanding of "heaven" (p104f). Whether he likes it or not, Dr Gooding is in fact attributing to these millions of Christians a kind of "demythologizing". Indeed, the most ironical point of Dr Gooding's claim here is that he is doing more or less what Bultmann invited us to do - to interpret ancient man's talk of heaven in the language of a this-worldly objectivity as "imagery to express the other-worldly" ("New Testament and Mythology", p10, N.2). How this squares with his opening charge that "when they (the demythologizers etc) talk of the Ascension they are by no means talking of the same thing as Luke" (p95) is perhaps something that I should leave to Dr

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...ing to answer for himself.

And so we return to the heart of the issue. We can pose thus: (1) Did Luke think of heaven as a place above the earth, and so of the ascension as a literal going up to heaven? (2) If so, what does that mean for our belief in ascension? The answer to the first question can only be resolved by exegesis, and the most probable answer given by exegesis, as we have seen, is Yes. Well then, where does that leave us? (Note the dialogue of question, answer, question,). Are we bound to this understanding and conceptualizing of the ascension? In the paragraph quoted above on pxx Dr Gooding would seem to demand that. But then his rather forced exegesis of Acts 1. 11 (distinguishing the "going up" from the "to heaven" - see pxx) shows that he does not want us to be bound to that a conceptuality. For Dr Gooding is as much a man of the twentieth century as I am at this point, and would find a remark attributed to the first Soviet cosmonaut, "I can't see any God up there", just as ludicrous as I do. He resolves the problem by denying the most obvious meaning of the passage in Acts. The alternative is to recognize that Luke's conceptualizing of the ascension does pose something of a problem to us - the problem of translating not just his words but also his conceptuality into a modern idiom appropriate to (though not wholly determined by) our advanced scientific knowledge. Then Luke's "ascension" (in biblical terms) beyond the eye of mortal man becomes a "message from our world to the other world" (in Dr Gooding's language, p114), where the continuities and discontinuities between "our world" and "the other world" have to be explained in much more subtle terms than ever Luke (or Jesus or Paul or John) found it necessary to strive for.

Paradoxically the results of the two ways of handling the problem (Dr Gooding's and mine) are not so very different. It is the methods that differ. Dr Gooding has to deny the most obvious meaning of Luke's writing: he has to construct an exegesis which in effect denies that Luke was a man of his own time; he has to depict him as in effect sensitive to the sensibilities of a believer in the scientific age. All because this word "demythologizing" evokes for him nightmares of rampant subjectivism. The better way, I submit, is to recognize the conceptuality of Luke expressed in this account of the ascension, to recognize that it is a

conceptuality we cannot share, and to translate it into a conceptuality more capable of conveying Luke's meaning to today. If "demythologize" is a word which sets off bad vibrations, then let us abandon it by all means and talk instead of translating beliefs which use an outdated conceptuality into a different conceptuality. But it comes to the same thing.

In short, if Dr Gooding asks me whether I believe that Jesus ascended to heaven in the way that Luke meant when he wrote Acts 1.9-11, I have to answer No. And, I may add, I have more than half a suspicion that Dr Gooding's answer is actually the same. But if Dr Gooding asks me whether I believe that Jesus "ascended to heaven", my answer is Yes. That is the "reality of faith" which Luke expressed in the conceptuality of his own time. That is the reality of faith which we today have to re-express in conceptuality appropriate to our time.

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Use of the Old Testament

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was steeped in the OT. The main themes in the Epistle are taken from it, the chief arguments are based on the exegesis of it, therefore it is no surprise that one of the perennial questions which has concerned students of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been the question of his use of the OT, and this has usually been dealt with under two aspects: what text was he using; what exegetical principles was he following.

Text: Naturally early scholars looked to the Masoretic Text to find the source of the OT quotations in the NT (and in Hebrews). Very quickly however they began to discuss the possibility that the quotations may have come instead from the Septuagint. Already in 1650 L. Capelli /88 had come to the conclusion that the NT writers quoted from the Greek and not from the Hebrew as was generally supposed. This had been the dominant trend in particular in regard to Hebrews. /89 In recent years most scholars have considered as a proven fact, in dealing with the OT quotations in the Epistle, that the author was quoting from the LXX version of the OT. Some have suggested that the author knew and quoted only the LXX, without any knowledge of the Hebrew language at all. /90

The question of a Hebrew or Greek Vorlage having been for a long time satisfactorily settled, another question arose, namely, which manuscript of the LXX was the author following. The view most commonly held on this question was that put forward by Bleek, /91 repeated by C. Büchel /92 and found in many commentaries and monographs in the twentieth century. Bleek had argued against the Pauline authorship of the Epistle as part of his evidence demonstrated that the author of the Epistle followed a text similar to that found in Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae, unlike Paul who followed that represented by Codex Vaticanus. This set the main lines along which the question over the OT quotations in Hebrews has been carried on: what the OT Septuagintal text used by the author of Hebrews was, and which of the texts represented by Codex A or Codex B, /93 and how to explain the divergences from the texts found in these manuscripts. It has been the second of these questions, how does

one explain the divergences from the main known codices of the LXX that has proved the most fruitful. Padva /94 suggested that the author had a text other than that found in Codex Alexandrinus for his Psalm quotations; Spicq /95 considered that the author used a manuscript which came from Family A (Alexandrinus), but with certain readings related to B and the Lucianic recension. In the quotations from Daniel Spicq thought that the author was following the Theodotion recension and in his quotations from Deuteronomy a liturgical text. /96 K.J. Thomas /97 argued that the author was following a Codex which was more primitive than Codex A or B, and any divergences from this primitive codex were due largely to deliberate changes on the part of the author. F. Schröger /98 gave lists of the readings where the text found in Hebrews agrees with Codex A against B and B against A; where the readings in Hebrews are paralleled in other manuscripts; and finally where the readings in Hebrews are unique. His conclusions were threefold: many quotations are paralleled in the LXX manuscripts known to us; four quotations (Heb.1.6; 10.30; 12.5; 13.5) are from a source we no longer have; many of the readings unique to Hebrews can be explained as due to the influence of the author himself. Other explanations of the divergences from the OT text found in Hebrews included the theory that the author used a testimony book /99; that he was using a Pre-Masoretic Hebrew text /100; that he was using a synagogue lectionary /102; that his memory failed him /103.

While work on the epistle to the Hebrews was going on, very important strides were being taken in Septuagintal studies. The project started in 1908 as the Göttingen Septuaginta-Unternehmen and after a slow and painful start it is now bearing much fruit. Its purpose was to isolate the various Septuagintal families /103 and to produce a series of editions of LXX books in which the extant manuscripts were both collated and evaluated from the point of view of the families to which they belonged. This project has not yet reached its completion but enough has been achieved to have an influence on work on the OT quotations on Hebrews /104.

As a result of the work of the Göttingen Commission and the insights gained from work on the Epistle to the Hebrews several things have become clear. First of all, the

Codices A and B are just two codices of the LXX which happened to have been preserved. It would be a rare coincidence indeed if history happened to preserve the precise LXX manuscript used by the author of Hebrews. Hence comparison of the OT text used by the author of Hebrews and that of Codex A or B alone must prove in the long run to be sterile. Secondly, the LXX textual situation at the time of writing of Hebrews was much more complicated than had been suspected.

/105 Thirdly, any worthwhile work on the OT quotations in Hebrews must concentrate on the recension which has the greatest affinities to the text found in Hebrews, not one individual manuscript. Fourthly, scattered in seeming random fashion in the witnesses to the LXX are many readings, insignificant in themselves, which cannot be said to characterize any one recension. These are usually of a stylistic nature, often involving only one word and do not in any way alter the meaning of the passage. Many insignificant textual variations in the OT quotations in Hebrews belong to this class and do not betray any deep theological motive on the part of the author. Fifthly, it is perfectly possible and indeed likely that the author's textual Vorlage differed from one OT book to another. Each OT book therefore quoted in Hebrews has to be examined separately, and the conclusions drawn about the textual provenance of one OT book cannot be applied to another. It is therefore possible that the quotations from Deuteronomy /106, or the Psalms /107, belong to a different tradition than those from the rest of the OT. Sixthly, the reading in the NT could influence the Septuagintal reading found in any of the great recensions.

In view of this, work had to be continued on examining the textual Vorlage of the quotations from the OT in the Epistle. F. Ahlborn presented his thesis in 1966 to the University of Göttingen /108 in which he re-examined the LXX quotations in light of the recent Göttingen Editions of the Septuagint. This work was continued in 1971 by the author in a thesis presented to Queen's University, Belfast and in an article to be published in NT Studies. /109 The conclusion of the work so far is that in several books of the OT /110, the recension from which the text quoted by the author is fairly clear, whereas in other books there is still some uncertainty. However it seems possible to assert that the author was using whatever local text he had to hand and that he reproduced it faithfully apart from

Exegetical Methods

In discussions of the author's exegetical methods two interdependent aspects have usually been considered, and for the sake of clarity we will keep them separate. The first aspect concerns the formal exegetical rules which the author follows; the second concerns the underlying attitude which he displays toward the OT.

In the past fifty years more and more studies have been published concerning the formal exegetical rules followed both by the rabbis, /112 by the sectaries of Qumran /113 and by Alexandrian exegesis represented by Philo /114 and scholars have pointed out that the author of the Epistle follows some of these exegetical rules on occasions. Padva for example, suggested that the author's biblical interpretation was purely rabbinic in its subject matter and its form. /115 Markus Barth considered that his exegetical method was near the Haraz ("String of pearls") method of the rabbis, which in turn seems to be reflected among the Qumranites by the collections of Testimonies. /116 Many scholars have pointed to Hebrews 7.3 as an example of the author's using the rabbinical exegetical principle Quod non in Tora non in mundo /117. Still other scholars have pointed out that the main features of the Midrash Peshet found at Qumran are also to be seen in the Epistle /118. These suggested similarities, however, concern the formal exegetical rules which the author follows, and it would be surprising if they did not in some way or other coincide with those used by other OT exegetes of his day. What is more important to consider however is his basic attitude to the OT, his "theology of the OT" and to compare that with the attitude found among his contemporaries, in particular the rabbis, the Sectaries of Qumran and Philo.

How then did the contemporaries of the author of the Epistle view the OT? All three groups under discussion shared with Hebrews a common conviction that the OT contains truths relevant for and applicable to their contemporary community. What was distinctive about each community was the kind of truth it claimed to find in the OT and the way

in which it found it.

The Rabbis looked to the OT to find a complete code of life to serve the needs of the Palestinian Jewish community. While the author of Hebrews shared with them the conviction that the OT was relevant for the everyday life of his readers and while he looked to it for examples of right living and faith, it is clear that it was not primarily to find a code of life that the author of Hebrews looked to the OT.

As for the Sectarines of Qumran, as a separatist group, the chief problem which they faced was that of defining for themselves the basis of their break with the religious point of view of the parent body. /119 They solved this problem partly by a polemic against the leaders of the larger group, and partly by re-interpretation of the scriptural traditions of the group from which they separated. /120 Their argument was that the Scriptures of the original group really applied solely to them, and justified their separate existence. Clearly however to demonstrate that a passage which seems to have been written at the time of the Return from Exile actually is talking about the situation in the first century before Christ requires some presuppositions which at first sight are not obvious. .

For the people of Qumran the presuppositions were as follows: God has communicated a secret or Raz to the prophet. This Raz could not be understood at the time it was given. It needed an interpretation, a Peshier. This Peshier would be given at the right time, the end time by God's chosen interpreter. The End-time has come. As Elliger put it: the hermeneutical principle of the exegete at Qumran can be summed up in two sentences:

1. The prophetic message has as its content the end-time;
2. The present is the End-time. /121

Revelation therefore is a two-stage process, the giving of the original Raz, and the later interpretation of that Raz at the End-time. In this way, the interpreter was able to decipher for his contemporaries the mysteries already proclaimed by God in the Sacred Scriptures. /122 In his work of decipherment the interpreter was free to use a variety of exegetical tools to make the meaning more applicable to his generation. He could for example use a textual variant, or a forced grammatical construction,

or an analogy or even the rearrangement or substitution of letters or words or expansions of supposed abbreviations in giving his interpretation, which is also creative and inspired. /123 Some scholars have seen very strong similarities between these ideas and those underlying the attitude to the OT found in Hebrews. Schröger /124, for example, after giving Elliger's two sentences which sum up exegetical principles current in Qumran suggests that the same too can be applied to the Christian community and its exegesis at the time of writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Certainly there are superficial similarities: both communities are the objects of special scriptural application in the end. But scholars have noted that in spite of these similarities which few would deny exist /125, there is no evidence in the epistle to the Hebrews that the author looked on the OT as a Mystery which had to be deciphered by all sorts of hermeneutical methods. /126

Philo believed that the Scriptures were relevant to his generation and the exegetical principle which he followed to show their relevance was that of allegory. He assumed that the texts have a twofold meaning, a literal meaning and an allegorical meaning. Only people specially endowed can interpret the allegorical meaning, and Philo seemed to put himself in that category because he used the allegorical method without reservation. /127 Scholars are divided as to whether the author of Hebrews used allegory as a principle of exegesis. Some suggest that he used it in a clear unambiguous way, "unimpeded by the historical meaning of the scriptural words, Hebrews uses and interprets the OT in the manner of the Alexandrians thinking entirely of ascertaining the deeper, true sense." /128 This is accomplished, according to Kümmel, by many means including allegorical expositions. The majority of scholars, however, are more cautious, either believing that if the author used allegorical exegesis, he used it in a limited and restricted way, /129 or denying that the author used allegorical exegesis in the way Philo used it at all. Sowers, whose book is concerned with the hermeneutics of both Philo and Hebrews, concluded by saying: "This study has underscored the lack of allegory in Hebrews as it was defined and used by the allegorists. The absence of this hermeneutical tool is particularly conspicuous because of the Alexandrian background of the

Whether scholars consider that the author used allegorical exegesis frequently, infrequently or not at all, there seems to be common consensus that it was not only his method of exegesis nor even his main one. Scholars have insisted that the author of the epistle considered that the connection between the Old and New Dispensation is a stronger and more historical one than that expressed by the concept of a *Raz* and its *Pesher*, or an allegory and its interpretation. To express this historical connection the author used a method of exegesis which is usually called typological exegesis. Typology has been described by Bultmann in the following way: "By typology as a hermeneutical method we mean the interpretation of the OT, practised since NT times, which finds in persons, events or institutions mentioned in the OT, preliminary illustrations or representations of corresponding persons, events or constitutions of the time of salvation which has broken in with the coming of Christ." /131 Underlying this correspondence between the OT and the time of Christ is the assumption that there is a divine purpose running through the ages and that parallels can be discerned between the various stages in the fulfilment of this divine purpose. /132 Hence, for example, the Exodus prefigures the Return from the Exile, which in turn prefigures the events surrounding the life and death of Jesus Christ. The correspondence between the events of the various stages in the Heilsgeschichte need not necessarily consist of analogies, they can also consist of contrasts where the exegetical argument runs as follows: what occurred imperfectly in the first age, has been perfected or fulfilled in this last Age. Again we quote Bultmann, "The combination of the idea of repetition with that of the two Aeons demands that the Antitype of the new period cannot simply be the repetition (even transferred to a higher level) of the type of the old age, but rather that it runs parallel to it, and stands in contrast with it. /133 Typological exegesis, therefore, is based on a belief that God's purposes which were imperfectly fulfilled in the old age are now being perfectly fulfilled in this new age. /134

How often does this exegetical method occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews? Earlier scholars such as Bleek, Riggenbach and Delitzsch considered that the typological method was used very frequently in Hebrews and practically all scholars assume

that it occurs at some point or other in the epistle. /135
 There has been a tendency in some circles, however, to minimize the role played by typological interpretation in Hebrews. Some scholars, for example, suggest that the author was guided in his OT exegesis by the search for a sensus plenior in the OT passages. /136 Van der Ploeg is typical of these scholars when he says: "It is the sensus plenior, profundior, in which he is most interested. It is for it that he reserves the most important place in his exegesis of the texts which cannot be referred directly or clearly to Christ and to the new Economy." /137 Other scholars, however, while arguing that the author looked for a deeper meaning, as Philo did, nevertheless find it difficult to apply to a first century author a theory of inspiration which belongs to later Christian development. /138.

The conclusion which seems to be emerging from discussion of the author's attitude to the OT seems to be that "the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, therefore, was a man of his time. He used the text which he found in common use in his day without being too concerned with LXX textual criticism, he used the methods of exegesis common in his day, and was influenced by exegetical traditions familiar to him." /139

Individual Themes and Passages

It would obviously be impossible within the confines of an article to discuss all the insights which have recently been given in connection with every theme dealt with in the epistle or every passage which has stimulated discussion. Rather for reasons of space, we will choose two cruxes and discuss them.

Covenant

There has been much discussion about the meaning of the word diatheke in Hebrews. In theory the word can have two meanings, that of "covenant" or that of "last will or testament", depending on the usage the author was following. In the LXX, for example, the word diatheke occurs 275 times and is used consistently for the translation of Berith or "covenant". "The LXX assumes that Diatheke expresses the

essential content of Berith.....it may thus be assumed that where the LXX uses Diatheke the intention is to mediate the sense and usage of Berith." /140 Since the author, as has been shown in many studies /141, was steeped in the Septuagintal Version of the OT, it could be argued that he would be following the LXX usage and so using Diatheke in the sense of "covenant". On the other hand, the word Diatheke can have another meaning, that of "will". This meaning is attested in both the papyri and in classical Greek, and is the exclusive usage in Hellenistic times. /142 The author, therefore, could very well have been following that usage.

When the word is studied in context in the Epistle a confused picture emerges. It occurs 17 times in Hebrews; in 13 of the occasions when it occurs, it seems fairly clearly to mean "covenant", especially in such passages as Heb 8 where the "old" and "new" covenant are being contrasted, and in Hebrews 9.4 where the author speaks of the "ark of the covenant." On the other hand, in four of the occasions when the word occurs (those in 1.15 (twice), 16,17) it would seem to require the translation "last will or testament." Indeed in most modern English Versions this meaning is essential in the sentence "Now, wherever a Diatheke is in question the death of the Diathemenos must be established, indeed, it only becomes valid with that death, since it is not meant to have any effect while the Diathemenos lives ". /143 Is it possible, however, that the author, whose Greek is considered to be among the best found in the NT, would use within the space of four verses, the same word to express two different concepts, that of "last will" and that of "covenant"?

Many scholars have argued that this indeed is the case, that the author is using the same word to denote two different concepts. Some have felt that in so doing he is being self-contradictory. "He jumps from the religious to the current use of Diatheke, even at the risk of involving himself in a contradiction which shows there is no real parallel". /144 Others however, have tried to defend him against the charge of self-contradiction, saying that the characteristics of a Greek will are similar to those of the OT covenant. /145

While this has been the widely accepted view, however, some scholars have professed themselves unhappy with it. Coulton, for example, after considering the possibility

was Foedus or Pactum and carried through a revision, that both Hebrews 9.16,17 and Galatians 3.15-17 "seemed to resist it". /156 From then on "by their association each passage has contributed to the obscurity of the other". /157.

His dissatisfaction with "testament" as a translation of diatheke in 9.16 and 17 was based on the following:

1. The author has used the same Greek word to convey two different concepts within a few verses
2. diathesthai is not used in the rest of the NT for making a will.
3. The author's thought would be inconsistent. It is God who makes the will, and therefore if the analogy is to be followed through it is God who should die that the will might take effect. In Hebrews, however, it is Christ who dies in order that the will should become valid.
4. Kleronomia is not found in the sense of "inheritance as distinct from "property" or "possessions" in the NT except for Matthew 12.7 (par.) and perhaps Galatians 3.18. On the other hand he argues that the words mesites and diathesthai fit in very well with a covenant interpretation and epi nekrois (in the plural) almost demands such an interpretation.

The main contribution which Hughes /158 made to the debate in his article on Heb.9.15ff and Gal.3.15ff, was to take very seriously the OT and Ancient Near East background against which the author of Hebrews used the term diatheke. In doing this he attempted to demonstrate "not merely the possibility of interpreting Diatheke as "covenant" (in the OT sense of Berith) in these two pericopae, nor even the probability of such an interpretation, but rather the necessity for so understanding this word". /159 In carrying out his task Hughes marshalled many of the above-mentioned arguments against the traditional interpretation of diatheke as "will" in Hebrews 9.16,17. He then attempted to interpret the verses in the light of the OT and Ancient Near East covenantal practice. His basic thesis was that "in the OT those who ratified or renewed a covenant often did so by means of a self-maledictory oath ritual which involved the bloody dismemberment of representative animals. This act signified the pledge unto death of the ratifying party (or parties) should he (they) prove

McCullough: Hebrews, IBS 3, 1981
that diatheke is used consistently to mean "covenant"
throughout the whole epistle, looked on his reversion to
the dual meaning for the word as a "capitulation". /146
It is, therefore, not surprising that there have always
been scholars who have argued for the consistency of the
author, by postulating that the word diatheke means only
"covenant" or only "last will" in the epistle.

Riggenbach /147 for example argued in 1908 that the
author used diatheke in the sense of "Will" throughout the
epistle. Two years later Adolf Deissmann, when speaking
about the word diatheke "which so many scholars translate
unhesitatingly Covenant" /148 said

there is ample material to back me in the
statement that no one in the Mediterranean
world in the first century AD would have
thought of finding in the word diatheke
the idea of covenant. St. Paul would not,
and in fact did not. /149

and so he argued that Hebrews used diatheke consistently
in the sense of "last will".

This view has been taken up again in recent years by
J.B. Payne /150 in 1962 and by J. Swetnam. /151
But in view of the strong LXX evidence that diatheke was
used to translate berith and in view of passages like
Heb.9.4, it seems impossible to discount the author's in-
tention to use diatheke to mean "covenant" in at least some
places.

Almost 20 years before Riggenbach wrote his commentary,
B.F. Westcott had expounded the theory that Hebrews was
using the word diatheke in the sense of "covenant"
throughout the epistle, even in 9.16 and 17. /152 This
idea attracted very few supporters /153 and several
commentators attacked it. /154 In 1977 and 1979, however,
two important articles appeared, apparently independently,
defending this view. In the shorter and earlier of the two
articles Professor Kilpatrick /155 argued that the
translation "Testament" for diatheke in Heb.9.16 has come
about through the influence of the Vulgate which consistently
and mistakenly translated diatheke by "Testamentum", even
when the NT was quoting an OT passage where the Vulgate
itself had the word foedus, "covenant". He said that when
scholars realized that the proper translation for diatheke

infaithful to his (their) oaths." /160 The persons therefore did not have to die in order for the treaty to be ratified, but instead animals were killed to "represent" the death of the ratifier. With this background in mind Hughes interpreted Hebrews 9.16,17 as follows: /161

Assertion (9.16): Where there is a covenant, it is necessary to represent (introduce=phero) the death of the ratified.

Reason: (9.17): ("These are legal reasons having to do with covenant procedure")

Assertion: for a covenant is made legally secure on the basis of (over) the dead (animals) (Hebrews has epi nekrois, i.e. the plural which suits this theory much better than it suits the theory of a will, where only the death of one person is required)

Reason: Since it is never valid while the ratifier lives.

Clearly this theory is very attractive. It fits in well with the author's argument that the New Covenant is superior to the old. It explains the use of the rather strange pheresthai, diathemenou and epi nekrois. It gives a consistent meaning for Diatheke throughout all the epistle. But is it possible? The difficulty comes in 9.17b: "A covenant cannot possibly have force while the ratifier is alive". Literally speaking this is just not true of an OT Covenant. The ratifier does remain alive. It is the animals who die as his representatives. Knowing this, would the author have used such an unambiguous phrase as 9.17b, **rather than keepin to the much vaguer** "a covenant is made legally secure on the basis of the dead (animals or humans)" of 9.17a. It is on the answer to this question that the theory that diatheke should be translated "Covenant" in Hebrews 9.16,17 will be decided. In any case no one writing in the next few years on the subject will be able to neglect the two articles which have revived a theory which had lain dormant for so long.

Hebrews 6.4-6

In this famous passage and in Hebrews 10.26-29 and 12.17, the author is arguing that if one has been brought into the light, and tasted the gift of heaven, and received a share of the Holy Spirit, and appreciated the good message of God and the powers of the world to come, and yet in spite of this has fallen away, then it is impossible to be renewed a second ti

since he has wilfully crucified the Son of God and openly mocked him. Apart from the meaning of the participles photisthentas etc., this passage presents two main problems: 1. Is the author really teaching that post-baptismal apostasy is unforgiveable, as was clearly taught in the later Shepherd of Hermas /163; 2. Is his doctrine paralleled to that of some sectarian groups? /164

In regard to the first question scholars have tried to soften the apparent harshness of the teaching. C. Spicq, for example, in his recent commentary asks whether the impossibility of conversion is simply psychological and moral dependent on the spiritual attitude of the apostate, and thus making a "conversion" inconceivable, or whether it is absolute, tied in to the nature of sin for which God, the author of salvation, refuses pardon. He rejects the latter alternative saying that it would limit God's mercy, and suggests that in the former case God can still intervene to overcome human resistance. The impossibility therefore for Spicq and many commentators is simply an apparent impossibility given the facts of the situation, but with God all things are possible. /165

A second way to soften the harshness of such teaching is that suggested by P. Proulx and L. Alonso Schökel /166 and followed by L. Sabourin /167, who suggest that the impossibility refers, not to a second conversion, but rather to crucifying the Son of God a second time. Sabourin's translation of the passage therefore is, "For it is impossible to crucify afresh the Son of God for the sake of one's repentance, mocking him, so as to restore a second time (or "reinstate" - lit., "make new again") those who have once been enlightened.... and have apostatized (lit., "have fallen away", "lapsed")." /168 This translation fits the wider context of Hebrews but it does not seem to fit the immediate context. The point of the passage is that the author is not going to repeat the essentials of the Christian faith because it is useless to do so, since "it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have been once enlightened...." (Hebrews 6.4,6) This is borne out by the example taken from nature and given in Hebrews 6.7,8. It is difficult to see why he would wish to point out at this stage in his argument that it is impossible to crucify Jesus a second time.

A third way of softening the harshness of the passage is

that followed most recently by Elliott /169 who took the two present participles (anastaurountas and paradeigmatiz-ontas) as temporal and so translated, "...it is impossible to bring them back again to repentance while they are crucifying the Son of God with their own hands and making mock of his death". F.F. Bruce's criticism of a similar theory however though made ten years earlier still has to be answered, when he said, "To say that they cannot be brought to repentance so long as they persist in their renunciation of Christ would be a truism hardly worth putting into words." /170

If however one accepts that the passage together with Hebrews 10.26-29 and 12.17 says what it seems to say, that it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened if they fall away, the problem arises: how did the author come to such an opinion which seems to contradict much of what is known of the theology of the early church? There have been several answers to this question.

Carlston /171 offers three explanations. The first is based on what he calls the "horizontal eschatology" of the epistle, and assumes that because the time before the parousia is short there will be no time or opportunity for repentance. As he points out, however, "the relationship between the shortness of time and the impossibility of repentance is never clearly spelt out." /172

His second suggestion is based on what he calls "vertical eschatology" and assumes that the underlying theme of the epistle is the true worship of God, worship which requires sacrifice and in the case of the epistle, the sacrifice of Jesus. Since this sacrifice has already taken place at the end of the ages, cannot be repeated, and is retroactive in effect as were the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, no further sin is possible. This indeed may be the logical conclusion of the author's theology but it is not stated in the epistle and in Hebrews 6.4-6 it is certainly not given by the author as the reason why there can be no second repentance.

Carlston's third suggestion is more clearly based on the text of Hebrews 6.4-6. He suggests that the author is arguing, "Since one who has fallen away has forsaken the efficacy of that sacrifice (that of Christ), and since there is no other, there can be no restoration. Only through th

veil, i.e., the flesh of Christ, can men enter the new sanctuary....To spurn this sacrifice is thus to make fellowship in the worshipping community impossible." /173

Buchanan /174 develops this latter idea with reference to a "treasury of merits" which he sees as being an important part of the author's doctrine of repentance and atonement. He argues that in the theology of the author of the epistle Christ's sacrifice makes up the merits required, but "the merits which were added by that sacrifice could be used once, but no more. Once a Christian had been forgiven, there were no further sacrifices possible to build up the treasury of merits upon which one might draw." /175

The theories both of Carlston and Buchanan, however, seem to me not to do justice to the subtlety of the author's thought and to limit too much his view of the atonement. In my view /176 the author's doctrine of the impossibility of a second repentance follows naturally from his belief, stated so many times in the epistle that we must not spurn the gifts of God. Just as a field which has been well watered by the rain is expected to yield fruit and is not kept indefinitely but is eventually burned and its crops changed, just as in the Old Covenant the neglect or spurning of God's gifts led to punishment and the loss of those gifts so even more so in the New Covenant, the spurning of the greatest gift of all will have the direst consequences and will result in the losing of that gift.

Conclusions

Clearly many questions concerning Hebrews remain unsolved. Progress has been made however along several fronts. With increased knowledge about the OT text as it was preserved at the time of the writing of the epistle, some advances have been made in determining the OT text the author used and his attitude to it; with the increased interest in "rhetorical criticism" and its wider application to NT books, knowledge of the author's literary structure has been greatly increased. It is however in the area of the religious and cultural milieu from which Hebrews arose, that in my view most progress has been made and the most promising work has been done. As a result of greatly increased knowledge of the religious situation prevailing in the Roman world in the first century AD, scholars have been in a much better position to place the epistle in that

milieu, and at the same time to use the epistle to help complete their picture of that culture. It is along these lines that we can hope to see some fascinating research in the future.

Notes.(Continued)

88. "Quaestio de Locis Parallelis Veteris et Novi Testamenti", Critica Sacra, Paris 1650, quoted in E. Ellis, Paul's Use of the Old Testament, London 1957, p2, N5.
89. Cf. J.C. McCullough, Hebrews and the Old Testament, Unpub. Diss., Queen's University Belfast 1971, p3, N2,3.
90. Cf S. Sowers, op.cit.p75; A. Nairne, The Epistle of Priesthood, Edinburgh 1913, p273.
91. F. Bleek, Der Brief an die Hebräer, Berlin 1828, 1836, 1840; cf. espec. Vol 1 p369f.
92. "Der Hebräerbrief und das alte Testament", Th.S und K, 1906, p338.
93. Cf. H.B. Swete, An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, Cambridge 1900 p403 who agrees that the OT text in the Epistle resembles that of Alexandrinus. W. Leonard, op.cit. argues the claims of Vaticanus; cf. P. Padva, Les Citations de l'ancien testament dans l'Épître aux Hébreux, Paris 1904; James Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Edinburgh 1924, plxii; C. Spicq, Comm.op.cit. Ii p335.
94. P. Padva, op.cit, p100
95. Comm.op.cit. Vol i, p335f
96. ibid
97. K.J. Thomas, The Use of the Septuagint in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Unpublished Dissertation presented to Manchester University, 1959 and "The Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews", NTS 11 (1965), pp303-325.
98. F. Schröger, Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger, (Biblische Untersuchung, Bd.4), Regensburg 1958.
99. The first really detailed working out of the theory that a Testimony Book may lie behind some or all of the OT quotations in the NT was done by Rendel Harris, Testimonies, Cambridge 1920, 2 vols. He deals with Hebrews in vol.II pp43-50. In more recent years F.C. Synge, Hebrews and the Scriptures, London 1959, has been a strong supporter of the Testimony Book hypothesis; cf. too P. Prigent, Quelques testimonia messianiques, THZ 15 (1959), p421. The theory however has been rejected by most recent scholars including Spicq, P, oeg, Thomas, Bruce, Howard, Katz, Kistemaker etc.
100. Cf. G. Howard, "Hebrews and the OT Scriptures", NT 10 (1968), pp208-216.
101. V. Burch, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Its Source and Message, London 1936; quoted in E. Grässer, art.op.cit. p205
102. Cf. E. Grässer, op.cit. p205 and Kümmel, RGG, Vol 5, p1517 and literature quoted there.
103. This of course is based on the assumption that there are Septuagintal families to be isolated. For a different view that the differences in Septuagintal readings are due to different translations from the Hebrew rather than scribal modifications of an archetype, cf. P. Kahle, The Cairo Geniza, London 1947; T.W. Manson, Dominican Studies 2, 1949, pp183ff.
104. The following Septuagintal books have been published: Genesis, Deuteronomy, 1 Esdras, Esther, 1,2,3 Maccabees, Psalms and Odes, Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom of Ben Sirach, 12 Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Thrones, Letter of Jeremiah, Ezekial, Susannah, Daniel, Bel and the Dragon.
105. Cf. for example, J. Barthélemy, "Redecouverte d'un chaînon manquant de l'histoire de la Septante", RB 60 (1953), pp18-29 and Les Devanciers d'Aquila, Leiden 1963 and the subsequent very full discussion of his theory of a hag ge recension.
106. Cf. C. Spicq, comm.op.cit., Vol I, p335 who thinks that the quotations from Deuteronomy come from a liturgical version.
107. P. Padva, op.cit., p100.
108. E. Ahlborn, Die Septuaginta-Vorlage des Hebräerbriefes, Unpub. Diss. Göttingen University 1966.
109. McCullough op.cit.

110. Especially Jeremiah and the Psalms
111. cf J.C. McCullough, *op.cit.*
112. J. Bonsirven, *Exégèse rabbinique et exégèse paulinienne*, (Bibliothèque de Théologie historique), Paris 1939; D. Daube, "Rabbinic methods of interpretation and Hellenistic rhetoric", Hebrew Union College Annual, 1949 and "Alexandrian methods of interpretation and the rabbis", Festschrift Hans Lewald, Basil 1953.
113. Cf W.H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls", BA 14 (1951), pp. 54-76; O. Betz, Offenbarung und Schriftforschung in der Qumransekte, Tübingen 1960; K. Elliger, Studien zum Habakuk-Kommentar vom toten Meer, Tübingen; Eva Osswald, "Zur Hermeneutik des Habakuk-Kommentars", ZAW 1956.
114. H.A. Wolfson, *Philo, Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, 2 volumes, Cambridge Mass., 1947; S.G. Sowers, The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews, Zurich 1965.
115. *Art.op.cit.p102f*
116. M. Barth, The OT in Hebrews, Current Issues in NT Interpretation, ed. by W. Klassen and G.F. Snyder, London 1962, p64.
117. Among the commentators who assume this cf. Moffatt, Windisch, Wickham, Hewitt, Bruce, Montefiore, Hering, Spicq.
118. Cf. B. Gärtner, "The Habakkuk Commentary and the Gospel of Matthew", Studia Theologica 8 (1955) p13 who points out that Heb.10.5ff is an example of pesher exegesis; R. Schnackenburg, *op.cit.* p81 stresses the Alexandrian nature of the exegesis.
119. Lucetta Mowry, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early Church, Chicago, 1962, p93.
120. Cf. J.C. McCullough, "Melchisedek's varied role in early exegetical tradition", Theological Review, 1/2 1978, pp52-66, esp. p66.
121. K. Elliger, Studien, *op.cit.*; F.F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis, *op.cit.* p 10.
122. C. Spicq, *art.op.cit.* p383; F.F. Bruce, Biblical Exegesis, p10.
123. Cf. W.H. Brownlee, *op.cit.* 54-76.
124. F. Schröger, *op.cit.* p280f.
125. E.g. H. Kosmala, *op.cit.* p16; F.F. Bruce, *op.cit.* p220, point out these similarities.
126. Cf. J. Coppens, *op.cit.* p259.
127. For a description of Philo's use of Scripture, cf. H.A. Wolfson, *op.cit.* Vol.I, p116; J. Daniélou, Philon d'Alexandrie, Paris 1958, p119
128. W.G. Kömmel, Introduction to the NT, London 1965, p277.
129. Cf. L. Vénard, "L'utilisation des Psaumes dans l'Épître aux Hébreux", Mélanges Rodehard, Lyons 1945, p264, who thought that the author used allegorical exegesis much less in the Psalms than in the Pentateuch; Spicq, *Comm.* Vol I thinks the only exegesis which is truly allegorical in that of Hebrews 13. 10-13.
130. S.G. Sowers, *op.cit.* p137; Westcott, *Comm.* p200; R.V.G. Tasker, The OT in the NT, Philadelphia 1947; G.B. Caird, "The exegetical methods of the Epistle to the Hebrews", Canadian Journal of Theology, 5 (1959) p44ff.
131. R. Bultmann, "Ursprung und Sinn der Typologie als hermeneutischer Methode", ThL 1950, p206.
132. Cf. Westcott, *op.cit.* p481
133. *Op.cit.* p207
134. Obviously this is very similar to the promise-fulfilment method of exegesis but its basis is very different. One is based on the assumption that God repeats acts in two ages, the other that God foretells what he is going to do in the future without reference to any doctrine of two ages.
135. Cf. Westcott, p481; Moffatt, *plxii*; Spicq, Vol I, p346; W. Manson p184ff; Michel p288; Bruce, p1 among commentators; also L. Goopelt, Typos, Die typologische Deutung des alten Testaments im Neuen, Göttersloh 1939, p195
136. For a survey of authors who share this view cf. R.E. Brown, The sensus plenior of Sacred Scripture, Baltimore 1955.
137. J. van der Ploeg, "L'exégèse de l' A.T. dans l'Épître aux Hébreux", RB 54 (1947), p228.
138. Cf. E. Grässer, *op.cit.* p211
139. J.C. McCullough, *Diss.* p420

140. G. Quell, Diatheke, TDNT, Vol II, p107
141. Cf. section on Hebrews and the OT.
142. A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and other early Christian Literature, Ed. W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, Chicago 1979(2), p183
143. Jerusalem Bible Translation
144. G. Quell, Diatheke, TDNT, 1964, Vol II, p131
145. Cf. K.M. Campbell, "Covenant or Testament? Heb. IX 16,17 reconsidered". EvJ 44 (1972), 107-111.
146. J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, "Lexical Notes on the Papyri", Exp.VIII, vi (1908), p563.
147. "Der Begriff der Diatheke im Hebräerbrief", Theologische Studien Theodor Zahn zum 10. Oktober 1908 dargebracht, Leipzig 1908; cf. too his Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, p229f.(ET)
148. A. Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East, (ET), London 1912², p341.
149. ibid p341.
150. J.B. Payne, The Theology of the OT, Grand Rapids 1962, p71ff.
151. J. Swetnam, "A suggested Interpretation of Hebrews 9. 15-18", CBQ 27, 1965 pp373-390.
152. B.F. Westcott, Comm., London 1892, pp298ff.
153. Cf. John J. Hughes, "Hebrews IX 15ff and Galatians III 15ff; a study in Covenant and Procedure", NovT XXI, 1979, p35f, N.26 for a list of eleven scholars who accepted Westcott's position (three of them later changed their opinions).
154. Cf. the critique by G. Vos, "Hebrews, the Epistle of the Diatheke", PThR xlii (1915) pp614ff (quoted in F.F. Bruce, Commentary, p211, n.123).
155. G.D. Kilpatrick, "Diatheke in Hebrews", ZNW 68 (1977), pp263-265.
156. ibid p264.
157. ibid p263.
158. John J. Hughes, op.cit. p27-96.
159. ibid p28.
160. ibid p41.
161. ibid p46.
162. Jerusalem Bible translation.
163. Mand iv.iii.
164. Cf. Josephus, Wars II, viii, 143-144 who says that Essenes caught in grievous sins were cast out of the community to die; cf. CD viii.1 and H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, Kommentar zum NT aus Talmud und Midrash, Munich 1965, Vol I, p636ff.
165. C. Spicq, comm, p153
166. P. Proulx and L.A. Schökel, "Heb.6.4-6 eis metanoian anastaurontas", Bib.56 1975, pp193-209.
167. L. Sabourin, "Crucifying afresh for one's repentance, Heb.6.4-6", BThBull 6 (1976), p264-271.
168. ibid p271
169. J.K. Elliott, "Is post-baptismal sin forgivable?" BibTrans 28 (1977), pp330-2.
170. Bruce, Comm, p124.
171. C.E. Carlston, "Eschatology and repentance in Hebrews", JBL 78 (1959), p296-300
172. ibid. p300
173. ibid p301
174. To the Hebrews, New York 1972, p108
175. ibid, p108.
176. J.C. McCullough, "The Impossibility of a second repentance in Hebrews, BTh 1974, pp1-7.

A reply by D. W. Gooding

The editor has suggested that I might care to comment on Dr. Dunn's reply to my original criticism of his article "Demythologizing - The Problem of Myth in the New Testament", New Testament Interpretation, Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1977, 285-307 (hereafter NTI); and I gladly do so.

My first comment is sincerely to ask Dr. Dunn's pardon for anything in which I have misrepresented him. I had, of course, no intention of misrepresenting him or of attacking his scholarship, and still less of attacking his character. It was with his views and their logical implications that I was concerned. If and where I have misrepresented them, I am glad to have him correct me; and indeed, if I still misunderstand and misrepresent them, to have him correct me still further.

The vigour of my attack on his views was caused by the fact that his chapter in NTI denies by implication Luke's historical veracity; and now his 'Reply' repeats and makes explicit that denial. Luke's words in Acts I: 9-11, "... houtos eleusetai hon tropon etheasasthe poreuomenon ...", leave no doubt that he intended not merely to assert the fact that Christ has ascended, but to describe the manner of the Ascension, and further to assert that the Apostles saw Christ ascend in this manner. Dr. Dunn rejects Luke's intended meaning as untrue: "If Professor Gooding asks me whether I believe that Jesus ascended to heaven in the way that Luke meant when he wrote Acts I : 9-11, I have to answer No." (Reply p. 27). By this denial, then, he denies that that happened which Luke says did happen, and that the Apostles saw what Luke says they saw; and this denial in turn inevitably leads him on to deny the reliability (as, perhaps, also the fact) of the angels' words about the manner of the Parousia, and similarly of our Lord's words on the same topic (Matt. 26 : 64) and of those of the Apostles

(I Thess. 4 : 16-17; Rev. 1 : 7): see NTI p. 300;
Reply p. 23f

Now, in my understanding of things, to deny the veracity and historical reliability of what Luke has reported (to say nothing about denying the accuracy and credibility of Christ's prophecy) is to lay a charge against Luke the seriousness of which is in no way diminished by Dr. Dunn's disclaimer that he is not making an accusation against Luke (Reply p. 25). The question at issue is: did that happen which Luke says happened? Did Christ lead the Apostles out to Bethany (Luke 24 : 50-51)? Was he there parted from them? Did they see him rise? Did angels appear and comment to them on the manner of the Going and of the Coming Again? If these things did not happen, and happen as Luke says they happened, there is no way that Luke can be relieved of the charge that he has told us an untruth. Whether he has done so unintentionally, passing on a story from the Apostles thinking it to be true when it was not, or intentionally, inventing a story and passing it off as historically and factually true when he knew it was not, this may affect his claim to innocence or guilt; but it cannot alter the fact that his record is not true - if the events he records did not happen, or happen as he says they happened. The only ground on which Luke could be relieved of the charge that he has told untruths would be that he never intended his record of the manner of the Ascension to be taken as the faithful reporting of an eyewitness account of a literal historical event, but had in fact taken pains (like Plato did when he told myths) to tell his reader that his story was mythical, invented to describe how Luke thought the Ascension may have taken place, or else invented to express Luke's faith in some theological doctrine (or theory) called, for convenience, the 'Ascension'. But the very opposite is the case, as Luke himself tells us. He claims that he is recording the tekmeria (1 : 3), the compelling evidence by which the Risen Christ demonstrated to the Apostles that he had risen from the dead. That evidence

consisted, as he tells us in his Gospel and in the Acts, of a succession of appearances, in the course of which he ate very literal fish, walked very literal roads, and, assembling with his Apostles, expounded Scripture and briefed them on their mission. According to Luke the leading out to Bethany and the Ascension were but the culmination of the final appearing, the final tekmerion. If these tekmeria, then, are fictions, they they have no value as tekmeria at all, and Luke's record of them fails of its declared purpose. What is worse, if while claiming to give us tekmeria he has in fact told us untruths unworthy of belief, then Luke must be charged with misrepresentation.

Here, then, in passing let me confess that I am genuinely perplexed by the way theologians have of publishing theories which imply that our Lord and his Apostles have told untruths, and then of adding blandly that, of course, they mean no offence, and are not making anything worth calling an accusation. I fancy those same theologians would be distinctly upset to be told that they themselves had told untruths.

But to return. I now see from Dr. Dunn's express statement in his Reply (p. 20) that I was wrong to deduce from NTI and his other writings that he does not believe the NT or Luke's account of the Ascension to be the Word of God. Again I apologise. And not only so: I am delighted to be proved wrong. On the other hand, when he first declares that he believes Luke's account of the Ascension to be the Word of God, and then adds that, nevertheless, he does not believe its intended meaning, I am frankly at a loss to know what the declaration amounts to.

His attempt to justify his hermeneutic at this point by appeal to an analogy with the principle of translation, seems to me, I must say, quite inadequate. The analogy is not true. While I am not a professional theologian (and I ask Dr. Dunn to believe the fact, and

my sincerity in reporting it, that in theology I am but a lay-man), I am a professional classicist; and for years I have, along with fellow-classicists, taught students to penetrate behind idiom and metaphor to an author's intended meaning, and to translate that intended meaning into the receptor language. But that is not what his hermeneutic does with Luke's account of the Ascension. He is himself witness that Luke is not merely using metaphor (NTI 300). He intends to tell us that Christ literally and historically led the Apostles out to Bethany, literally was parted from them, and that the Apostles saw him rise bodily from them. This intended meaning Dr. Dunn does not translate: he denies it. He adds that, of course, he believes in the Ascension. But, then, so did Luke. Here in the last chapter of his Gospel and in Acts 1, however, Luke is not simply confessing his faith in the fact that Christ has ascended: his intention is to tell us how it happened, as far as human eyes could see it. And this Dr. Dunn says he does not believe. If at this point he has some hermeneutic that allows him to reject Luke's intended meaning and substitute a different meaning which he did not intend, then it seems to me that this hermeneutic is doing the very opposite of what true translation should aim at.

And that brings me to his contention that I have completely misrepresented his "hermeneutical ellipse", by alleging that it presents us with nothing but subjectivism. About the one "focus", as he calls it, namely our understanding of what is written, I need not speak: I agree with him that here subjectivism necessarily enters in. The question is about the nature of the other "focus", which in this context is Luke's account of the manner of the Ascension. And here we must ask, Is Luke's account of the Ascension faithful, objective reporting of an event which the Apostles saw take place before their very eyes? If I have understood him rightly, he denies, in fact, that it could possibly be. (At least, that is what he seems to me to be saying.

Maybe here too I am mistaken. I hope I am. Maybe he in fact believes that Christ did literally lead the Apostles out to Bethany, that he did rise up before them, that the angels did appear and speak, and that the only thing he cannot believe is that Christ passed from this world into heaven simply by thus rising up. But I fear that he means that Luke's whole description of the Ascension derives not from the Apostles' report of what they saw happen, but from 'a first century cosmology which is impossible to us' (NTI 300).). So then, if Luke's account is not the objective reporting of an event witnessed by the Apostles, as Luke intended it to be, and imagined it to be, what is it? We need to know its status, since of the two foci this is the one that it supposed to be objective, which we must then interpret (necessarily subjectively) at the other focus. Later in NTI (301) Dr. Dunn seems to describe it as an expression of Luke's faith. But in what sense 'his faith'? Was it not a part of his faith that the Ascension took place in the manner in which he describes it? (Dr. Dunn himself admits that Luke intended his description literally.) But if, as Dr. Dunn maintains, the Ascension did not take place as Luke believed and says it did, then all we have in Luke's description is a highly subjective, imaginative and false reconstruction of the event. To that extent it is a fiction. Now while the existence of Luke's fictional story is for us an objective fact, the fictional story itself cannot be accorded the status of objective reporting of an historical event. It is and remains Luke's subjective creation. Both the foci, then, turn out to be subjective

Dr. Dunn maintains, I know, that behind Luke's fiction there was 'the reality of the love and faith and hope' (NTI 301) which Luke's subjective fiction was designed to express; but then on that same page he tells us (understandably on his hermeneutical presuppositions) that determining what that reality was is a something that each must do for himself. It is clearly a completely subjective matter. If I have no access to that

part of the Christ-event which was the manner in which the incarnate, resurrected Christ left our world except through Luke's subjective fiction, where shall I find anything objective as the starting point and basis for my (necessarily subjective) interpretation? I cannot see, therefore, how his theory of a hermeneutical ellipse with its two foci delivers his interpretational practice from complete subjectivism.

Dr. Dunn suggests that in commenting upon Luke's account of the Ascension I have by a forced exegesis 'denied the most obvious meaning of the passage in Acts' (Reply p.26) and superimposed my own interpretation on the text (Reply p.23). Needless to say, I had no intention of doing this. Luke himself says that a cloud received the ascending Christ from the Apostles' sight and I did not suppose - and still do not suppose - that Luke intends to affirm by anything else he says that the Apostles did actually see what happened after the cloud received Christ from their sight. If, however, my interpretation is false, I withdraw it, and reaffirm that I believe that the Apostles literally saw happen everything that Luke says they saw, in the manner and extent in which Luke says they saw it.

Dr. Dunn suggests also that my interpretation of Luke's description of the Ascension is unsound because I have not employed the true historico-critical method and compared Luke's description with the speculations of various contemporary, and near-contemporary writers. My answer is that I would count it sounder method to compare what Luke says with what the Writer to the Hebrews says. The latter has the advantage of being both contemporary and the author of an inspired canonical text. He first tells us that the "more perfect tabernacle" into which Christ has entered is not made with hands, i.e. it is of supernatural origin; and then he further defines it as "not of this creation" (9 : 1). He also tells us that in leaving our world and entering heaven Christ has passed through a 'veil' (6 : 19). The nature of that 'veil', he does not, of course, tell us

but it is unlikely (from the OT analogy which he is using) that he thought of it as mere distance in space, and certain that he did not think of the journey from earth into God's heaven as one uninterrupted continuum. If, then, the Writer to the Hebrews shows himself aware that the heaven into which Christ has entered is not of this creation, we have no sound reason for asserting that Luke must have believed it was.

As for the fact that the Biblical writers believed in a hierarchy of created worlds beyond our own, what scientific cosmology has proved them wrong? Dr. Dunn appeals to scientific cosmology as the cause and justification of his disbelief in Luke's account of the manner of the Ascension. But what cosmology contradicts is his interpretation of, and deductions from, Luke's account, not Luke's account itself. Luke does not say, and is not fairly taken to imply, that the heaven into which Christ passed is a part of this creation such that if only an astronaut went far enough he could prove that it was not in fact there. Dr. Dunn claims that his interpretation is most natural one, a conclusion difficult to avoid (Reply p. 25). But it is only natural for those who first find it acceptable to suppose that under the guise of recording an eyewitness account of how the Ascension took place Luke is in fact giving us an imaginary, and to us unacceptable, account of how he thought the Ascension may have taken place. The implications of that supposition are immense. If on cosmological grounds Luke cannot be believed when he says that the Apostles saw Christ rise from Bethany, can he be believed when he reports the no less miraculous stories that the Christ who had been crucified and buried led the Apostles out to Bethany, ate with them in the Upper Room, walked the road to Emmaus, left the tomb?

Nor is Dr. Dunn's conclusion difficult to avoid. He reaches it because he insists that the angels' words that the Apostles saw Jesus going into heaven must mean that Luke held cosmology according to which heaven was situated in the sky above their heads; and that because

we cannot accept such a cosmology, we cannot accept the story that the Apostles saw Jesus rise from Bethany. The rising from Bethany must then be an imaginary detail invented by Luke on the basis of his erroneous cosmology.

But even suppose Luke held this unacceptable cosmology; it does not necessarily follow that his claim that the Apostles saw Jesus rise from Bethany is not literally true. I repeat the analogy which I used in original article. A stone age savage taken to Cape Canaveral to witness the ascent of a rocket might well on his return describe that ascent in the terms of some unscientific cosmology. That would not prove that his claim to have seen the rocket rise was based on his primitive cosmology, and was therefore to be disbelieved.

And secondly Dr. Dunn arrives at his conclusion by insisting (in spite of the mention of the cloud which hid the ascending Christ from the Apostles' sight) that the angels' phrase "whom you saw going into heaven", must imply that for Luke the journey from Bethany to heaven was one unbroken continuum. But that is not necessarily so at all. If I report that a friend of mine being in Downing Street saw the Prime Minister entering her car and going to America, and watched her going until her car was lost to sight, it would be false to insist that I thought that the journey from Downing Street to America was one unbroken continuum - by car all the way. And it would be grossly unfair to conclude further that my report that my friend saw the Prime Minister leaving by car and going to America must be nothing more than an imaginary expression of my faith that the Prime Minister is now in America.

Now I fully accept that the motivation behind Dr. Dunn's hermeneutic is of the very highest: to make the Christian faith acceptable to modern man. But if Luke intended by his record to say that the Apostles literally saw Jesus rise from Bethany (and as I understand him Dr. Dunn does accept this, NTI 300) it cannot

be sound hermeneutic first to deny that the apostles saw what Luke says they saw, and that to substitute for Luke's intended meaning a meaning which he did not intend.

The issue, then, as it seems to me, is: did the apostles or did they not see Jesus rise from Bethany as Luke says they did? It is a historical question. Maybe I have misunderstood Dr Dunn; perhaps he would in fact affirm that Luke's account of the Ascension is historically true. Maybe he is simply wishing to say, in his form of words, what other people might express by saying that Luke is using the language of sense-impression, as we do with phenomena like sunrise. The "mechanics" behind sunrise are, as we know, more complicated than it appears to our senses; yet a historian will happily and rightly record that so-and-so saw the sun rise, because that is what, as an observer on earth, he did see happen. Doubtless the "mechanics" behind the Ascension were unimaginably complicated; and maybe Dr Dunn means to say little more than that when Luke talks of the apostles seeing Jesus rise up in front of them, he describes it so because that is what they in fact saw happen, that is what that unimaginably complicated event looked like to them, that is how they described it.

Maybe, then, our dispute is about mere words. I fear it is not; but I sincerely hope it is.

REVIEWSPatrick Henry, New Directions in New Testament Study

SCM Press, 1980 pp300 £6.95

So large is the field indicated by the words "New Testament Study" and so vast the literature which is constantly being generated by and within it that only a very bold scholar would claim to be fully abreast of all its developments. Consequently books which survey recent work and describe the shifts in scholarly attitudes can be very useful, both to beginners and to those who have neither the time nor the opportunity to keep up their serious reading, as well as those who are engaged in one area of NT scholarship and want to see their own work in perspective. The success and value of Patrick Henry's undertaking - to provide a study of general trends in NT investigation and of the way in which various questions have been tackled in recent years - must be assessed in terms of its fairness and comprehensiveness, as well as in terms of its potential readership.

There can be little room for criticism of what Henry actually offers. His description of what is going on at present in NT study is clear and interesting, and the comments and criticisms he makes of the various trends and approaches are eminently sensible and balanced. For example his appreciation of the essential Jewishness of the NT (and of Christianity) is welcome, as is his caution with reference to the importance of Gnosticism (whose main tenets he describes admirably) for understanding Christian origins. In dealing with the problem of history in relation to Jesus he provides a very illuminating contrast between the approach of Kee, Young and Froelich (in Understanding the New Testament, 3rd ed. 1973) and Norman Perrin (in The New Testament: An Introduction 1974) and favours the contextual and historical approach of the former. He surveys various elucidations of the "enigma" of Paul and correctly claims that the apostle is misunderstood when scholars turn him into a systematic theologian. An important chapter summarizes and evaluates John Gager's sociological approach to the communal aspects of Christianity, and there is a quite provocative discussion of psychological insights, including the work of Mircea Eliade. An account of recent Roman Catholic scholarship reveals the quite dramatic changes brought about by major developments in that church. Of the newly-proffered aids to interpreting the NT Henry is more enthusiastic about the view of Paul Ricoeur than that of the structuralists, a view with which this reviewer would heartily agree.

As already indicated, it is difficult to complain about the descriptions and assessments presented in this book; but I have two significant criticisms to make of it. In the first place it is selective in what it deals with (e.g. there is virtually nothing on new work in the Johannine corpus) and it considers only books available in English. In depth and comprehensiveness are therefore impaired. Secondly, if this book is designed for beginners in NT study, it is too difficult and if it is intended to assist those already engaged in NT studies (at a scholarly level) it does not offer anything they will not and should not already know. For what audience does Henry write? If he hoped that his book would be used by those who find it hard to keep abreast of significant scholarly work on the NT, then I trust that his hope will be fulfilled. Many ministers ought to buy and read this book and convey

its spirit to their congregations. That spirit is summed up in the following quotation: "the chief effect of current NT study is the creation of an exploratory, tentative, questing frame of mind, prepared for surprises and capable of a kind of growth that is stifled when answers are too swift and neat." (p40) It is greatly to be hoped that this book - full of quotable quotations from a host of literary figures (including Shaw and Shelley) - will convince those who still need to be convinced that there are no such things in NT study as "assured results", "certain conclusions" and "easy answers": it will also show that critical investigation of the NT can be positive and even excitingly relevant.

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David Hill

G.W. Bromiley, Children of Promise: The Case for Baptizing Infants,

T.& T.Clark Ltd, 1979 ppxi, 116 £1.85

Bromiley's easily read treatise is a concise statement from the paedobaptist position. In addition to an introduction, conclusion and two useful indices, the main part of the book consists of the biblical basis for infant baptism (chapters 1 and 2); its meaning and scope (chapters 3 to 7) and the salvation of infants (chapter 8).

The book's aims are twofold: (1) instructional, to "get at the biblical understanding" of the subject (pvii) which demands "solid biblical investigation" (px); (2) eirenical - to avoid polemics and proselytizing (px), thereby contributing towards "mutual tolerance and respect" (px). The reader will be interested to find out if Bromiley's confidence in attaining these aims is justified (pxi).

As to the second aim, Bromiley exposes the deficiencies in the baptist position (p47,70), - but seems unaware that his criticisms apply equally to the paedobaptist position.

As to the first aim, Bromiley concedes the absence of any direct, explicit or exclusive evidence in support of his position (pp10f, see also pp 1,105), consequently we have a "brief and summarized account of the matter as the main evangelical churches of the Reformation see it" (px). This may not satisfy the reader, but the book does provide interesting insights as to how biblical concepts undergo a shift in meaning in a new context; for example, election (pp43-50), regeneration (pp76ff), seal (pp33,35f); note also the degree to which God's electing and saving grace is objectified and universalized in a Barthian manner (pp32,36,43f,50,60f,72,98).

The relationship between infant baptism and salvation lies at the heart of the book and one chapter (ch.8) is devoted to it. Bromiley pins his thesis on this (p92), but substantiation by relevant biblical material is conspicuously absent (pp98f). The reader is left wondering if the Holy Spirit does indeed act in a miraculous way in infants, who

are saved by faith in Christ but without the elements of consciousness and decision (pp98ff; 72,76)

Furthermore we may ask if infants are baptized because we are unable to distinguish which are elect and saved from those which are not ? (pp46, 100f) The paedobaptist reader may be perplexed to learn that the proper context for infant baptism is alongside adult baptism which is necessary to prevent the rise of "formalism, false security and an illusory Christianity." (pp68f)

Finally, the value of this book does not lie in its theological content which lacks cogency, but in its illustration of various relationships between biblical exegesis and historical and systematic theology (both Reformation and Modern), between exegesis and the use of inference (eisegesis ?), and between scripture and authority.

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W. Ivan Hull

J. Andrew Kirk, Theology Encounters Revolution,

Inter-Varsity Press 1980 pp188 £2.95

We live in a violent age yet, in the words of the author of this book, "theology's encounter with revolution is still in its initial stages" and little serious theological thinking about revolution has taken place. Christians who identify themselves with historical evangelical convictions are largely unaware of the urgency of the discussion (p163). While "there is still a considerable lack of enthusiasm within the World Council of Churches to grasp boldly and decisively the question of personal evangelism and its relation to the church's involvement in strategies for social change." (p139)

Those with theological expertise are therefore called by Dr. Kirk to devote more time to looking closely at what is happening and he himself offers us useful guidance.

(1) He provides his readers with a good historical background about the meaning of revolution and the church's thinking about it from the time of the Anabaptists to the confrontation with Communism.

(2) Next he offers us an accurate account of the various Christian authors in this century who have faced the question of justifiable social change. As general background he expounds the teachings of Rauschenbusch, Reinhold Niebuhr, Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer and then he examines the works of authors in the different regions and does so deliberately, as he holds that you cannot understand or make pronouncement about claims for social change unless you know the region where it is occurring. In North America we encounter the writings of Paul Lehmann and Daniel Berringer among the whites and among the blacks, James Cone and Boesak. We meet shrill voices like those of Segundo in South America and, remarkably, the more restrained words from South Africa. In Western Europe we are given summaries of the writings of Moltmann, Metz and Gollwitzer and in Eastern Europe of Hromadka and Lochman, who as Christians in Communist societies felt impelled to rethink the Christian

position.

Summarizing a good deal of this he writes, "Within evangelical Protestantism today there are three main tendencies, all of which claim to be the responsible biblical approach to Christian social involvement: first the Calvinist tradition.....which emphasizes the call of the church to 'Christianize' secular institutions in line with the Biblical understanding of man; second the pietist tradition which has given precedence to personal regeneration as the prior requirement before social structures can be meaningfully changed; third the radical reform-minded tradition which concentrates on the renewal of the Christian community as an alternative society (p76). To this section he adds two useful appendices on WCC thinking on social change and on the use of force and how it can be justified. Here he offers a detailed criticism of J.G. Davies, "Christians, Politics and Violent Revolution" - giving strong reasons for Christians practising non-violent opposition to the misuse of force and seeing the actions of a controlled police force as the one clear instance of the use of force that Christians can easily support.

(3) All this he bases on his understanding of Scripture. He is critical both of much modern biblical criticism and much traditional evangelical exposition of scripture. The former he considers as often so academic as to be out of touch with the life of the church, and as not taking the need of regeneration seriously. The latter displays "in some churches such a loyalty to a particular confession.....as to make this a serious substitute for creative study and application of the Scriptures." (p11) Dr. Kirk believes that scripture clearly shows the power of God already active within history, enabling new beginnings to take place here (p168). We see this already when God specially chooses Israel to declare his will and obey it, e.g., in the treatment of poorer members of the community and the strict control of personal wealth. "Jesus' whole ministry actively challenged....the political expediencies on which societies are ordered." His too was clearly a liberating ministry, touching every aspect of man's existence. In place of the security of the law, he offered the maturity of a love relationship based on the acknowledgement.....of sin forgiven. He challenged every kind of superhuman power from whose control man could not free himself, the threatening forces of nature, demon possession, physical disability and greed (p173).

And so the conclusions of this very informative and penetrating book are: "What is urgently needed within ecumenical and conservative evangelical circles is a serious attempt to bring together theologically a concern both for social justice and for personal conversion." (p140)

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J.L.M. Haire

Stephen H. Travis, Christian Hope and the Future of Man,

IVPress, 1980 pp143 £2.85

This book and the book by Dr. Kirk reviewed above are the third and fourth in a new series, edited by Howard Marshall and published by

the Inter-Varsity Press. The authors, writing from an 'evangelical' position give a very fair account of the views on which they comment and engage in no demagogic polemics against those with whom they differ. In this book Dr. Travis has deliberately chosen his title to include both the hope of the individual Christian and the destiny of mankind - two realities which ought not to be separated. In face of God's gracious purposes the Christian, he argues, is bound to believe both in individual salvation and in a consummation for the whole cosmos.

After a short survey of the variety of opinions held by contemporary Christian writers about the real meaning of biblical eschatology, Dr. Travis discusses the sources of apocalyptic and believes that it is basically a true development of the teaching of the prophets produced in times of even greater stress and suffering for the people of God. Here one may ask whether he allows sufficient place for Hellenistic or Zoroastrian influence at the very least on apocalyptic terminology. The more explicit references to individual resurrection, judgment and eternal life made by the apocalyptic writers he sees transformed by the words and work of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He offers a clearly stated exposition of what he believes our Lord Himself to have said about the consummation. He examines the interpretations offered by scholars of the terms used by the early church to describe this aspect of the person and work of Christ and the extent to which these terms are conditioned by the first century Jewish and Gentile cultures.

He then discusses the value given to these terms by contemporary writers. He agrees with Pannenberg that they are not to be rejected or explained purely in terms of individual decisions of faith, but with Murdock he questions Pannenberg's view that all history is revelatory. Moltmann he holds is right in claiming that Christian hope is not merely attained in the future but is in one sense already realised within history. This must not, however, be so stressed as to deny the reality of a final consummation of history itself.

There follows a discussion of the three central questions: the nature of the Parousia, life after death and the final judgment. Christ's Parousia must not be interpreted primarily as his spiritual presence in the church as C.H. Dodd and J.A.T. Robinson have argued. Rather it stands for the final consummation, not to be described however literally in terms of our space and time. Certainly the language Jesus used implies that the age of decisive fulfilment of Israel's hope has already dawned and its present manifestations guarantee God's ultimate triumph (p90). Here Jesus like the prophets affirms God's final victory by stating its imminence. Therefore both literalist and demythologizing scholar should give a more careful assessment of the nature of the imagery in which the reality as the culmination of history is expressed (p92)

When Christians speak of life after death they should note that this is always itself closely connected with the parousia of Christ. In reviewing the four theories of theologians in the interval between an individual's death and the final judgment Dr. Travis supports T.F. Torrance's view that what appears as an interval to us living in time is not in fact an interval when viewed within the divine eternity which embraces and supersedes the temporal.

Dr. Travis next outlines Professor H.H. Price's theory that souls can be in contact with one another apart from the medium of an earthly physical body. He questions John Hick's view that there must be a period

for development after death, by drawing an analogy from the immediate change in personality which can occur in conversion. The one sure basis for the Christian's confidence in life after death is not any philosophical theory of the nature of the soul but God's revealed concern for those whom he draws into fellowship with himself and will not discard.

The last chapter discusses the nature of final destiny. Emphasis is laid on the freedom which God grants man and the consequent possibility of a final refusal of God's grace. Such refusal is best seen, not in terms of punishment but in terms of the misery of separation from God. Heaven and Hell are to hear the words "Come" or "Depart from me" with the joy or terror which this must involve. Eternal punishment and annihilation are two images, both in Scripture, to bring home the seriousness of the rejection of God's grace. The former is much less prevalent in the Bible than traditional theology has taught, yet is a picture whose seriousness is not to be set aside while annihilation can be just as terrifying if one realised from what one is cutting oneself off. We must recognize the power and the limitations of all these earthly pictures. We must also realise that those who have never known Christ are in a different category from all of us who have had this privilege. Here we must exercise the agnosticism which scripture itself manifests while at the same time realising our absolute duty to witness to the good news of salvation.

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